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# "Firing the pigskin real right": Media representations of Simpson and Romo.

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“FIRING THE PIGSKIN REAL RIGHT”:  
MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF SIMPSON AND ROMO

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Kinesiology  
San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Lindsey M. Eliopulos

December 2009

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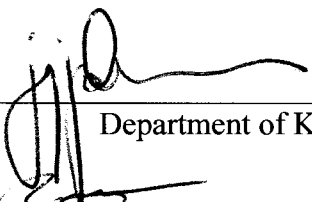
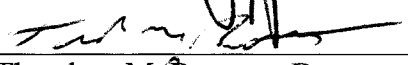


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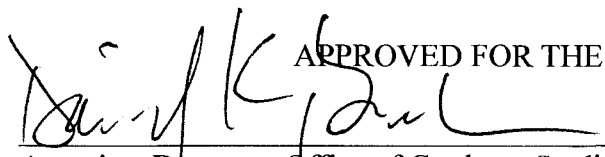
"FIRING THE PIGSKIN REAL RIGHT": MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF  
SIMPSON AND ROMO

by

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## ABSTRACT

### “FIRING THE PIGSKIN REAL RIGHT”: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF SIMPSON AND ROMO

by Lindsey M. Eliopulos

The purpose of the study was to examine the media's representations of sport-celebrity couple singer-actress, Jessica Simpson and Dallas Cowboys Quarterback, Tony Romo. One hundred magazine and 100 newspaper articles published between December 17, 200, that coincided with the first publicized notion of the “Jessica Simpson jinx” and April 15, 2009, were qualitatively analyzed. The investigation revealed the prevailing dominant ideologies of patriarchal structures, traditional gender roles, hegemonic masculinity and deviance, while underscoring the mass media's ubiquitous characteristics. The literature emphasized the mass media's representation of the celebrity and the media's habitual employment of gossip and rumor linguistics to frame the narratives surrounding Simpson and Romo, both autonomously and collectively. The study uncovered typologies that mirror the archetypal sporting partnership: Simpson's polarized physical attributes, her feminine position as a “supporter,” her function as an “antagonist” (i.e., the femme fatale, Yoko Ono), and Romo's position as a hegemonic male and a victim. Through the development of the above themes, the researcher sought to illustrate the concepts of villanization and victimization in the mass media, where Simpson was portrayed unfavorably and Romo was portrayed favorably suggesting the need to maintain the patriarchal order while restraining female dominance.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jessica Simpson once questioned, “Is this chicken, what I have, or is this fish? I know its tuna, but it says ‘Chicken of the Sea.’” To those who withstood my own senselessness, reassured my uncertainties, navigated through my misdirection, making the process a bit more manageable, this work is for you—a true representation of your devotion.

Foremost, to my father, Mark, my mother, Marla, and my sister Nikki—celebrities in their own right—this work is truly an homage to the love, encouragement, and opportunities you have afforded me, for without you, this would not be possible.

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For the sincerity, astute observation, and often necessary brutal honesty of my bipedal companions: Roby, Laura, Robert, and Nicole—for the solace, smiles and serenity of four-legged friends: Keydis, Allister, Lily, Mrs. Bojangles, Dark Knight and Yoshi—this paper is the product of your support.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Texas Stadium, Irving, Texas: On December 16, 2007, adorned in their silver-starred Cowboys' attire, fans enthusiastically convened to watch their (12–2) Dallas Cowboys play the (6–8) Philadelphia Eagles. Cheers, chants and applause echoed as America's favorite football team took the field. Dallas Cowboys' starting quarterback, Tony Romo's high-profile partner, singer-actress Jessica Simpson appeared in the luxury box outfitted in a slim-fitting pink cowboys' jersey embroidered with the number nine in support of her boyfriend. Photographers and cameramen alike were tireless in spotlighting the singer-actress, and eventually she became the main event. As Tony Romo threw interceptions, incomplete passes, and ultimately failed to lead his team to a touchdown, something happened that had not occurred since November 2004 for the Cowboys: the fans became hostile. In unison, fans began chanting, "Send Jessica Home," "Send Jessica Home" ("Jess & Tony Hot," 2008, p. 47). Injuring his right thumb on this throwing arm, the Romo-lead Dallas Cowboys lost 10 to 6 in a game that would go down in the record books with the fewest yards gained of the season, 240. This was Romo's lowest single-game rating of his career (22.2), having completed only 13-of-36 passes for a total of 214 yards. Despite her absence from the playing field, Jessica Simpson found herself bearing the brunt of the blame for the loss.

Fast forward to September 11, 2008, Simpson appeared as a guest on *The Late Show* with David Letterman. Simpson assured the audience and public alike that Romo was "firing the pigskin real right." Ultimately, Simpson disavowed her label as the jinx,

unwilling to acknowledge her influence. Even she, however, could not deny how widespread the notion had become, as even President George W. Bush had made jinx jokes at her expense. Undeniably, the persistent focus on her role in a game that had occurred nearly a year prior to the interview illustrated the media's willingness to deem celebrity relationships as culturally relevant.

The mass media's fascination with celebrity culture and the celebrity personality, has contributed to a new cultural phenomenon of celebrity worship. Yet, it should be noted, "that the public individual, in all its various guises, is certainly not a recent cultural innovation" (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 2). As Holmes (2005) noted, "With the growth of arts and technologies with a wider range of public access, by the middle of the nineteenth century celebrity was becoming established as a mass phenomenon (p. 24; also see Gamson, 1994, p. 261). While the rampant nature of salaciousness is linked to the newspaper empire of William Randolph Hearst, its evolution has been transformed into the contemporary term, the *mass media*. The omnipresence and expansion of the mass media has come to exemplify "a morass of cross-pollinating companies [which] is far bigger and its appetite for higher ratings, higher profits-*more, more, more*" (Orth, 2004, p. 18). The modern-day cultural news climate has become a state of "extreme media presence, extreme stories, extreme recognition" (Orth, 2004, p. 18) and consequently has come to legitimize American pop art printmaker Andy Warhol's iconic statement that "in the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes" (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 3), with a new-fangled perception that "everybody's out for some action" (Orth, 2004, p. 18). Whether or not the selected media (i.e., magazines and

newspapers) would represent Simpson or Romo as media-craving ignoramuses, it can be presumed, in the advent of modernity and ascension to the new terrain of celebrity which exists in the 21st century, that “Warhol’s prophesy has been superseded” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 3). The “instantaneous and continuous public access to even the most mundane lives” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 3) via the Internet manifests in a manner where the delineation between those worthy of adulation or “celebration” congests into a stream of “anyone possessing the merest semblance of public visibility” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 3) begs the question of what denotes a celebrity?

Defining celebrity was initially problematic because while the word itself is a ubiquitous term used in our daily jargon, it “is a notoriously difficult concept to define” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 2). The term is noticeably absent from Williams’ (1976) “invaluable glossary of cultural terms *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*,” which “would be unthinkable had Williams been writing now-at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 1). Consequently Williams’ oversight of such a term indicated the need to find an operating definition of celebrity. The study acknowledges the root of the word *celebrity* deriving from the “French word *célèbre*, meaning “well known in public” (Rojek, 2001, p. 9). Boorstin’s (1961) definition of celebrity was “a person who is known for his well-knownness” (p. 57). Hence, the term celebrity required its own definition for the present study because the mass media has defined the term celebrity through an array of representations.

Celebrity in this study was then established as a person whose existence is considered common knowledge in popular culture (i.e., *célèbre*), through recognition of

their profession or other widely publicized activities (i.e., “known for his well-knownness”) on a national or international level and who is frequently portrayed by media as such. This definition became paramount in constructing an operative means of differentiating Hollywood actress and singer, Jessica Simpson, as well as sport star and Dallas Cowboys Quarterback Tony Romo from the “ordinary” or “common” human being.

Emerging on the pop music scene in the late 1990s Simpson debuted her first album, *Sweet Kisses* in 1999, reaching double platinum (Appendix A). Releasing five more pop albums, a holiday album, and finally merging into the country music realm in 2008, Simpson’s career began as a singer, but transitioned into the realm of television and movies. The MTV reality show *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica* centered on her marriage to now ex-husband (2002–2006) 98 degrees boy-band member, Nick Lachey. The show garnered widespread viewership, leading to spin-off television shows such as Nick and Jessica’s *Family Christmas* and *The Nick and Jessica Variety Hour*. After appearing on the network television sit-com, *That 70s Show*, Simpson’s apparent aptitude for scripted comedy parlayed her small-screen career onto the big screen where she starred in the feature films *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Employee of Month*. Additionally, Simpson is the author of a book based on how to plan the perfect wedding and an entrepreneur of her own lifestyle brand, the Jessica Simpson Collection, which has annual reported earnings of \$400 million dollars. According to Forbes (2008), Simpson made \$20 million dollars off her lifestyle collection in 2008.



As Simpson's first album was hitting the shelves in 1999, Tony Romo was a Midwestern quarterback at Eastern Illinois University (Appendix B). A successful college player, Romo was an All-American and the Walter Payton award recipient in 2002. Regardless of his accolades, Romo went undrafted by the National Football League in 2003. Accepting an invitation to walk on in 2003 for the Dallas Cowboys, Romo began as their third-string quarterback. Emerging as the starting quarterback almost 4 years later in 2007, Romo has been an All-Pro quarterback in both the 2007 and 2008 seasons. Romo signed the largest athletic apparel and footwear deal in NFL history with Starter for \$10 million for 5 years and signed a 6-year, \$ 67. 5 million dollar contract with the Dallas Cowboys.

Secondary comparison to the "compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity," which Rojek (2001) coined as a *celetoid* (p. 20), gave further credence to Simpson and Romo's hierarchical position on the celebrity totem pole. Such became an indicative barometer of their "celebration," both individually and collectively, in the public's consciousness. While Simpson and Romo's "impact on the public may appear to be intimate and spontaneous" (Rojek, 2001, p. 10), the recognition that "celebrities are cultural fabrications" (Rojek, 2001, p. 10) lent relevance to the inclusion of the manufacture of the celebrity persona via "cultural intermediaries" (e.g., the mass media; Rojek, 2001, p. 10).

Rojek's (2001) notion that "celebrity status comes in three forms: ascribed, achieved and attributed" (p. 17) gave relevance to the inquiry of the specific categorization where individuals obtain adulation through various, albeit specific, forms.

Celebrity can be achieved through oligarchy, aristocracy (i.e., ascribed), perceived accomplishment, talent, or meritocracy (i.e., achieved) or as “Boorstin coined the term ‘pseudo-event’” (i.e., attributed), which “refer[s] to the arrangement of newsworthy events and personalities by publicists and newspaper editors” (Rojek, 2001, p. 18). Such categorization proves that “there continues to exist a hierarchy of celebrityhood, measured in terms of cultural penetration and endurance” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 3).

Initially isolating Simpson and Romo and branding them with the insignia of the “achieved” celebrity much like “Brad Pitt, Damien Hirst, Michael Jordan, Darcy Bussell, David Beckham, Lennox Lewis, Pete Sampras, Venus and Serena Williams” (Rojek, 2001, p. 18) had achieved, their perceived talents and skills emanating in the athletic and artistic arenas seemed straightforward, undeniably simplistic. As society exists in a transitory state, one finds that “descent and falling are twinned with ascent and rising” (Rojek, 2001, p. 79) of the celebrity persona, as the media’s role in the construction of the celebrity is “often unable to resist engineering their downfall” (Rojek, 2001, p. 79). Ultimately, celebrities “are pawns in larger social, economic, and media systems over which they may or may not possess control” (Parry-Giles, 2008, p. 89).

I have compounded the term *sport-celebrity* to be indicative of the highly scrutinized, highly public romantic relationship in which the male is the sport-celebrity (e.g., Romo, the athlete) and the media-celebrity is the female (e.g., Simpson, the nonathlete). This term does not imply that Romo is merely an athlete, a noncelebrity, and Simpson is the sole celebrity, garnering public adulation. While Romo’s profession as a

sporting star and National Football League's Quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys may seem "real and spontaneous" rather than "contrived and predetermined" as does Simpson's role as a Hollywood actress (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 11), there is still a "fundamental difference [that] divides them: What sport stars do for a living is authentic in a way that what movie stars do is not" (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 10).

Whether there is a great divide in the media's overall representation of both Simpson and Romo, the evidence of the social obsession, via the mass media's construction, has illustrated that the space between the celebrity universe and collective society is rapidly narrowing (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Boon & Lomore, 2001; Cheung & Yue, 2003; Jenkins, 1992; Maltby, Houran, & McCutcheon, 2003; Maltby, McCutcheon, Ashe, & Houran, 2001; McCutcheon, 2002; North & Hargreaves, 2006; Phillips, 1974; Rustad, Small, Jobes, Safer, & Peterson, 2003; Sheridan, North, Maltby & Gillett, 2007). Contemporary celebrity "is ubiquitous, and possesses *élan vital* [*vital impetus*] for a ravenous public audience. As Parry-Giles (2008) stated,

Celebrities are venerated not because of the rational power of their discourse, not because of the intelligence of their arguments, or even the worthiness of their accomplishments, but because they provoke highly affective reactions from audiences and from the larger culture. (p. 89)

Because of the continual probing and examination of the celebrity, a phenomenon manifested. The general public's unceasing demand to probe into the celebrity milieu has lead to a deluge of research on celebrity media representations. While some researchers have studied the phenomenon of celebrity in general (Boorstin, 1961; Dyer, 1979, 1980, 1987; Gamson, 1994; Gledhill, 1991; Marshall, 1997; Meyers, 2009; Turner, 2004; Schwichtenberg, 1993; Soukup; 2006), including its implications on the world of sports

(Andrews, 1996; Andrews, Carrington, Jackson, & Mazur, 1996; Altimore, 1999; Baker & Boyd, 1997; Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Butryn & Masucci, 2003; Cole & Hribar, 1995; Holt, Mangan, & Lafranchi, 1996; Jackson, 2001; King, 1993; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Rowe, 1994; Vande Berg, 1998; Whannel, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002), there is a dearth of academic work that has examined media representation of the sport-celebrity couple genre (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Clayton & Harris, 2004; Whannel, 2001, 2002).

In the ever-evolving world of celebrity obsession where “news is more and more centered on the latest sensational drama” (Orth, 2004, p. 18), celebrities emerge as “significant public entities responsible for structuring meaning, crystallizing ideologies, and offering contextually grounded maps for private individuals” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 2). Modern life requires the media to embrace all facets of “celebrityhood.” The superstar couple emerges in fulfillment of this contemporary necessity. As “scoops on who is behaving badly with ditzzy heiresses, who sleeps around” (Orth, 2004, p. 18) become fodder for tabloid gossip and perceived “news-oriented” outlets alike, the examination of the celebrity couple becomes a valuable, worthy commodity, a replacement which supersedes world events (i.e., denoted as political and social upheaval, war, national disaster, elections, etc).

At this point, it is important to note that while the terms celebrity and superstar, in representation of the individual and couple alike, are used interchangeably. The terms at their core present certain representative differences. As the superstar has celebrity status, the public regard for one considered a superstar is elevated in comparison to the celebrity.

Therefore, conceptually, the terms cannot be exchanged; hence celebrities are categorized into of A-list, B-list, etc., celebrities. This makes relevant the resulting interaction of these terms in regards to the celebrity couple. While the coupling of two superstars will not likely affect their status regardless of their pairing, the conjoining of a superstar and celebrity often times will elevate the celebrity to superstar status as well. At times this additionally occurs among celebrity-celebrity relationships where their combined form is greater than the sum of its parts. As the entertainment-centric populace covets scandal over world happenings (Orth, 2004), a feeder system materializes, percolating the interests of a celebrity-obsessed civilization.

While the inquiry sought to delve into the various representations of Simpson and Romo, both individually and collectively, the notion of percolation was not exempt. The term *percolation* in the study encompasses the filtering or the spreading of the news regarding Simpson and Romo by the selected sources. However, the relationship between the media and the consumer remained outside of the scope of the research. An investigation into celebrities and relevant media reports on their actions as a model for social determinism remained beyond the boundaries of this study as well (Dyer, 1987). However, the notion that “we are, at least superficially, privy to a wealth of information that encourages us to develop a sense of familiarity, intrigue, and sometimes obsession with celebrity figures” (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 1) was not fully ignored, as the media’s fascination into the superstar couple has evolved and manifested itself as a window into the past that presents a look into the future. Such a theory would further aid

in presenting connectivity between Simpson, Romo and celebrity predecessors (i.e., other sport-celebrity couples and achieved celebrities).

Further acknowledgment of the superstar couple highlights these celebrity love stories. These love stories have proved so innumerable that epithets have been created to simplify the identification of these pairings to a single title, resulting in entities such as Brangelina (i.e., Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie), Bennifer (i.e., Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez), TomKat (i.e., Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes) and the like. The immense focus on these couples, many of whom frequently find themselves among inventors and politicians on *Time* magazine's list of the world's most influential people, has paved the way for the powerful emergence of what the study classifies as the sport-celebrity couple.

The idea of a media celebrity romantically linked to a sports figure is not a new notion. It dates back to the brief marriage of actress Marilyn Monroe and professional baseball player Joe DiMaggio who were arguably the first of the modern sport-celebrity couple in terms of media coverage and influence (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001). In recent years, because of a whirlwind of increasing coverage, interest in the sport-celebrity couple has increased, illustrating the magnetic nature of high-profile couples (Whannel, 2001, 2002). As "the growth in the range of media outlets and the vastly increased speed of circulation of information have combined," they have transpired into what Whannel (2002) termed as *vortextuality* (p. 93). Vortextuality is a term referring to the notion that "certain super-major events come to dominate the headlines to such an extent that it becomes temporarily difficult for columnists and commentators to discuss anything else" (Whannel, 2002, p. 93).

Such a notion is evident in Whannel's (2001, 2002) examinations of the contemporary sport-celebrity coupling of football's "golden-boy" David Beckham and Victoria Adams, Posh Spice from the pop group the Spice Girls. Whannel (2002) contended that the wedding of David and Victoria "itself was the climax for a media blitz, vortextual in character" (p. 76). As "television presenters alluded to it, politicians made asides about it, radio phone-ins discussed it, and comedians made jokes about it" (p. 143) the coupling acted as a catalyst for the detection of the unfolding "vortex effect" in regard to the pairing of Simpson and Romo as such is a "consequence and condition (albeit temporary) of celebrity life in the modern age" (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 218).

The literature focused on the sport-celebrity couple lent relevancy to the aforementioned; as for all intents and purposes, Simpson and Romo are categorized in this domain. With the scarcity of literature on the sport-celebrity coupling, supplemental scholarly insight on the analyses of the wife and girlfriend of the elite sportsman acted as an umbrella resource (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999; Whannel, 2001, 2002). Wives and girlfriends of elite sportsmen were seen as supplementary characters that were beautiful, supportive, and domesticated creatures who served as trophy wives and girlfriends. These demarcations became an apparent illustration of the wives of the Dallas Cowboys players. Pearlman (2008) noted that the wives of Cowboys were "long-legged, big-breasted beauties with résumés chock-full of homecoming queen anointments" (p. 166). This evidence operated as a barometer for how Simpson would be positioned either favorably or unfavorably by adhering to the standards set for Cowboy

wives. This did not exempt the possibility for representations in regards to Simpson's physical exterior appearance to fluctuate throughout the examination's selected time frame from December 17, 2007, to April 15, 2009. Correspondingly, it was posed that the presentation of Simpson's physical attractiveness would translate advantageously or disadvantageously for Romo, a prominent theme conveyed in an array of analyses encompassing the archetypal sporting partnership (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; Whannel, 2001, 2002) and additionally in Bernard Malamud's (1952) novel, *The Natural*.

Malamud's (1952) novel, albeit fictitious, denoted the importance of acquiring a woman of superlative attractiveness in stating, "the only bride acceptable to the great Roy Hobbs is a veritable Marilyn Monroe" (Cochran, 1991, p. 83). This declaration translated into a descriptor which seemed in accordance with an articulation "that women are supposed to be beautiful and are judged and evaluated based on their looks" (Gordon, 2008, p. 246). While Malamud (1952) portrayed Hobbs for his natural, "God-given talent for baseball" (Cochran, 1991, p. 82), he also depicted "a society where wives are chosen for a surface pulchritude that can enhance their husbands' images and further their husband's careers (Cochran, 1991, p. 83). A substantial sum of one's worth, specifically in terms of the wife or girlfriend of the elite sportsman, is positioned on the outward physical appearance or beauty. This draws linkage to aesthetics or "aestheticization" referring to the "perception and judgement regarding beauty" (Rojek, 2001, p. 102). This idea (i.e., aesthetics) began the preliminary development and identification of how, in what means and in which manner, the media would place significance on Simpson's



appearance. Additionally, it was presumed that Romo's physicality would correspond to societal, as well as mass media, portrayal of traditionalized gender demarcations and functioned as a prerequisite for inclusion of literature pertaining to gender roles.

Literature regarding gender roles expressed "boys should be aggressive, independent, and achievement-oriented, whereas girls should be passive, sociable, nurturing, and dependent" (Sage, 1990, p. 46). This concept extended the potential for the mass media not only to project, but also amplify, this perception in regards to Simpson and Romo, not merely collectively but independently as well. This thought fused harmoniously with the gender ideologies that have long existed through learned activities (i.e., play and sport). As Greendorfer (2001) described, "discriminatory socialization practices begin when we give infant boys balls, bats, and blue items and infant girls dolls, stuffed toys and pink items" (p. 7). Acknowledgment of the ways in which "power and privilege are culturally reproduced through cultural practices" (Greendorfer, 2001, p. 9) facilitated an introduction to the notion of *hegemony*—"a lived system of meaning and values which when experienced as practices become reciprocally confirming and accepted as natural" (Greendorfer, 2001, p. 9).

As sport is a "subtle but potent contributor to male hegemony" (Sage, 1990, p. 50), Romo's occupation originally labeled him as a dominant being positioned upon the hegemonic hierarchical structure. The fluid nature of hegemony (Gramsci, 2005; Williams, 1977) deemed it inappropriate to represent Romo as stagnating in such a position, as notions of flux emerge in contrasting representations of sporting celebrities Michael Jordan and David Beckham. Contemporary basketball star Michael Jordan

inspired terms such as forceful, powerful, and courageous (McDonald & Andrews, 2001), and David Beckham has been equated to the emasculated male who embodies the “metrosexual” doing “un-masculine things” (e.g., attending fashion shows, wearing the infamous sarong on holiday and having matching wardrobes with his wife, Victoria; Whannel, 2001, p. 141). Recognition of Romo’s sporting contemporaries posed the question as to whether Romo’s representation would depict little wavering from the hegemonic ideal or would garner him depictions corresponding to the likes of David Beckham as “representations around him centre on an attractive and controversial dynamic of masculinity” (Rahman, 2004, p. 229; see also Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002).

A male sports star that diverges from society’s definition of masculinity ingrained by society and the mass media may be considered a weakened being; a female star that deviates similarly from the prescribed, traditional roles is branded as a disruptive, disorderly person. A woman who deviates from traditional roles is constantly categorized as a *femme fatale*, meaning “fatally deadly woman” in French and is seen as a “woman who lures men into danger, destruction, and even death by means of her overwhelmingly seductive charms” (Allen, 1983, preface). The incorporation of literature pertaining to the *femme fatale* in relation to Simpson, which the study will denote synonymously with a “man-eater,” furthered parallels to the way Yoko Ono, spouse of deceased English rock musician, John Lennon, who was often solely blamed for the demise of his band The Beatles, was perceived (Friedlander, 1996). Lending modern relevance to the idea that the deviant woman must be quelled by society (Crawford, 2006), contemporary sport

celebrity wives Victoria Beckham and Janet Jones, wife of Wayne Gretzky, were frequently described as “another Yoko Ono (Jackson, 2001). This study defined this effect as the *Yoko Ono effect* and uniformly utilized such terminology upon the initial emergence of representations, specifically in regards to Simpson’s purported “jinxing” actions of December 16, 2007. It is to be noted that this terminology will not act as a prelude or be implemented in a suppositional manner but was only employed upon the surfacing of comparisons within the selected media outlets. This study furthermore implied such positioning as synonymous with being “bad luck.”

As the study employed sources from both magazines (*IN TOUCH, Life & Style, Star, Us Weekly, People, Sports Illustrated*) and newspapers (*Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, USA Today, Washington Post*), the exploration of the dissimilarities between the two mediums encouraged a greater understanding of how Simpson and Romo’s representations could possibly emerge in a multitude of ways. Yet, it is to be noted, the contrasting of magazine and newspaper sources, in regard to content and overall representation of Simpson and Romo, did not preclude the observation of similarities.

Newspapers are generally considered newsworthy outlets, opposed to the perceived trivial content in magazine publications (Holmes, 2007). The magazines reviewed in this study, often considered to epitomize the frivolity of such publications, are readily categorized as *glossies*, referring “to the slick shine of the paper on which the magazine is printed, which seems to mimic the shine of the glamorous stars covered inside” (Meyers, 2009, p. 898). Meyers (2009) asserted these “glossies” (i.e., *Star, Us*

*Weekly, Life & Style, In Touch* and *People*) are different from the long-established tabloid magazines (i.e., *The Sun* and *The National Enquirer*; p. 898), as tabloids “serve[s] up a mixture of celebrity gossip, human-interest features, usually with a ‘sensational’ twist” (Bird, 1992, as quoted in Meyers, 2009, p. 898). However, this study did not adhere to one strict term but instead utilized the terms of tabloids, gossip magazines, celebrity magazines and glossies interchangeably. Nonadherence to a single term shows the potential for a magazine to become transient among these sectors (e.g., glossies versus tabloids). Instead, the utilization of Bueno, Cárdenas and Esquivias’s study (2007) of gossip magazines in Spain, which are based on “personality journalism” (p. 623), allowed for further recognition of the tactics employed in these particular media outlets. While the magazines contained in this study remained within the bounds of the United States, the study did not exempt further examination of the relationship between the similar journalistic tactics in upmarket gossip magazines versus the populist press as noted by Bueno et al. (2007). This acknowledgment contributed to further differentiating, or moreover, drawing similarities that could have the possibility of emerging, not strictly in regards to a specific magazine, but to that of a particular magazine’s representation and treatment of a celebrity.

While it is to be noted that the exploration of the magazines and newspapers aforementioned was navigated from their noted definitions and perceptions that surround the concept of newsworthiness, the employment of a textual analysis and adherence to MacDonald and Birrell’s (1999) theoretical framework sought not to uncover journalistic

practices but rather to reveal the power structures and multiple meanings that become embedded in the meanings.

As noted above, this study utilized a textual analysis to examine the representations of Simpson and Romo as well as the representations surrounding the December 16, 2007, incident and its ensuing events until April 15, 2009. While the study does consider the media's framing of these events and the representations of both Simpson and Romo, this study was not a strict framing analysis but rather an analysis that illuminated the media's practices in regards to gender and power structures. As "journalists are not innocent" (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 14), the framing of the news, or what Messner and Solomon (1994) denoted as a "news frame"—"the way the media assign meaning to an event or occurrence, by deciding whether or not to report on something, and what details to highlight, ignore, or to deemsize" (p. 54) furthered the notion that "meanings are commonly drawn from socially shared (hegemonic) understandings of the world" (Messner & Solomon, 1994, p. 54). News journalists and media controllers are "disproportionally white, male, middle-class, and middle-aged" (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 14), and their aptness to furnish and attach either advantageous or disadvantageous labels (Mongerson, 1997, p. 96) becomes the essence of the media's power to vilify or victimize those within the limelight.

#### Statement of the Problem

The way in which media outlets attach advantageous or disadvantageous labels to "a person or incident may be the simplest way for the reporter to control the reader or viewer'[s] thinking" (Mongerson, 1997, p. 96). As a result, the mass media becomes an

omnipresent entity, a potent and significant force of information to society (Mongerson, 1997, p. 2). Regardless of the denotation as a “newsworthy” entity, the manufacturing of stories becomes an evident facet and a continual fixture in all spheres of the mass media (Mongerson, 1997, p. 102). As drama emerges as a principal characteristic in the construction of the news story, the media’s aptness to concoct and present events that can be transformed into an enticing spectacle for the masses becomes a reiteration that “drama is a defining characteristic of news” (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 16). Similar to a fisherman’s routine, “they [mass media and journalists] start off with nothing but a news net, cast it out, and haul back the news of the day” (Mindich, 1998, p. 6).

As drama becomes entwined within the news story, the notion of objectivity becomes questioned due to the skepticism that surrounds the media and its practices. As objectivity is difficult to defend due in part to “its slippery nature, since it is often defined in negatives—a lack of bias, a lack of party affiliation, a lack of sensationalism” (Mindich, 1998, p. 6), the mass media turns into a terrain full of paradoxes. As Paletz and Entman (1981) stated,

They crusade against injustice; they condone inequality. They prop up capitalism; they vilify big business. They dismiss or distort dissent; they exhume irrelevant fringe groups. They educate the public; they pacify the people. They mythologized John F. Kennedy; they helped topple Richard M. Nixon. Fighters for truth, spreaders of murky illusions, the mass media seem to jumble the pieces of power in America. (p. 6)

As this study employed sources from both newspapers and magazines, the contradictory effects of the mass media have manifested into the embodiment of seemingly indistinguishable characteristics. A source that may have at one time been deemed newsworthy and balanced has materialized into a less apparent division. As a result

Mindich (1998) noted, “the line between the old guard and the tabloids is less clear than ever,” where the “tabs [tabloids] are breaking stories that get picked up by mainstream and using “objective”-sounding leads” (Mindich, 1998, p. 3).

With the frequent emergence of gossip and rumor within an array of mass media outlets, the notion of objectivity is furthermore questioned. As rumors surface regularly and saturate the front-page, “the juxtaposition of hard news alongside sensationalistic rumors gives the latter credibility by association” (Rosnow & Fine, 1976, p. 97). As this notion allows for a sense of integrity to exist in its content, “gossip is also given a prominent role in mass communications” (Rosnow & Fine, 1976, p. 98) where the repetition of the “small talk” regarding “political, society, professional and entertainment personalities” is equally and continuously imbued (p. 98).

The manner in which the media composes, structures, and constructs a story to represent an individual or an event lends credence to the manner in which representations of both Simpson and Romo individually and collectively had the potential to emerge correspondingly. The notion that the mass media is reflective of the long-standing, deep-rooted patriarchal order controlled by the White male furthered the notion of the its [the media’s] partisan mentality (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 4). As a result of the media’s failure to espouse a middle-of-the-road mentality, the maintenance of the “status quo” and orthodox customs have become evident and correspondingly are visible in research encompassing the sporting wife/girlfriend of the professional sportsman (Mindich, 1998, p. 4). Literature on the wife and girlfriend of the sportsman has alluded to the complementary nature of the woman, where she becomes a supplementary being, an

extension of her sportsman and his profession (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers; 1990; Thompson, 1999; Whannel, 1999, 2001). This particular research predominately focused on a partnership in which the male is the sole breadwinner and furthermore the bearer of notoriety, while the wife/girlfriend is denoted as a largely unrecognized name outside of context of their relationship. As previous research encompassing the sporting partnership was conducted in a qualitative manner where the sporting wife/girlfriend was interviewed, to date, there has been minimal research on the sport-celebrity couple where both the male and female are nationally celebrated for their fame with the exception of Cashmore and Parker (2003), Clayton and Harris (2004), and Whannel (1999, 2001, 2002).

As the media becomes increasingly fascinated with celebrity (Rojek, 2001), more importance is placed upon how the media portrays those within the public eye. This notion was previously exempt from a majority of inquiries into the sporting partnership. During a time when it is widely accepted that a female pop star (Jessica Simpson) can be blamed for ruining the success of a professional football team (Dallas Cowboys), inquirers of the sport-celebrity pairing (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Clayton & Harris, 2004; Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002) stand to benefit immensely from learning how the media uses language to portray the sport celebrity couple.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine the media's representations of the sport-celebrity couple Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo from December 17, 2007, to April 15,



2009, by exploring the media frameworks as well as the cultural ideologies and societal tenets that are embedded within their individual and combinative representations.

The selection of 100 newspapers and 100 magazines appearing between the determined time frame was enhanced by the placement of substantial focus on literature pertaining to celebrity, gossip and rumor linguistics, framing theory, hierarchical structures, patriarchal order, traditional gender roles and hegemonic masculinity. Accentuation of the archetypal sporting partnership and the sport-celebrity relationship further enhanced the above subject matter and offered illumination of the media's role in vilifying and victimization of both Simpson and Romo autonomously and collectively.

Concurrently, the study sought to draw parallels by revealing the dissimilar and corresponding representations to previous traditional sporting partnerships and sport-celebrity relationships. The study sought to highlight the multitude of representations constructed and readily imbued by the mass media not merely regarding the sport-celebrity relationship but traditionalized societal beliefs. A qualitative analysis was employed to explore these representations.

#### Research Question

1. What are the selected media's representations of sport-celebrity couple, Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo in publications dated between December 17, 2007, and April 15, 2009?

## Delimitations

The study was delimited to the following:

1. The media sources examined in study were limited to magazines and newspapers.
2. Magazine and newspapers examined were limited to those published December 17, 2007, through April 15, 2009.
3. Magazines employed in research were limited to the following sources: *IN TOUCH*, *Life & Style*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Star* and *US Weekly*.
3. Newspapers employed in research were limited to the following sources: *Dallas Morning News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Daily News*, *USA Today* and *Washington Post*.
5. The investigation of the sport-celebrity couple was limited solely to the examination of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo in the selected media outlets.

## Limitations

1. There was a limitation on the number of magazines and newspapers that could be examined; hence, the study remained predominantly within the boundaries of mainstream national mass media sources. This is primarily because of the bounded access one has to current and archived publications of unfamiliar local and regional media outlets as well as the language barriers of international coverage.
2. Since examination encompassed the sport-celebrity coupling of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo, the results may not be generalized to other sport-celebrity couples.

3. The time frame of magazine and newspaper sources included those published from December 17, 2007, to April 15, 2009, and representations garnered before and/or after these dates were not explored.

#### Assumption

It was assumed that the selected media's representations of Simpson and Romo will mirror representations conferred to "achieved celebrities" (Rojek, 2001), while additionally epitomizing the archetypical sporting partnership that upholds the patriarchal order.

#### Definitions

The key terms contained in this study are defined as follows:

*Achieved celebrity*: "Derives from the perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition" (Rojek, 2001, p. 18).

*Ambivalence*: "Term initially used by Duncan & Hasbrook (1988) to explain how (or the way in which) media portrayals of women athletes contain mixed or contradictory messages" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 38).

*Apologetic reaction*: Employed by females to lessen the sense of societal incongruence or variance (Creedon, 1994; Del Rey, 1978; Felshin, 1981).

*Ascribed celebrity*: "Concerns lineage: status typically follows from blood-line" (Rojek, 2001, p. 17).

*Attributed celebrity*: "Valuated into public consciousness as newsworthy figures, primarily at the behest of mass-media executives pursuing circulation or ratings wars" (Rojek, 2001, p. 18).

*Auto-degradation*: “Primary exponent of status-stripping is the celebrity” (Rojek, 2001, p. 80).

*Celebrity*: A person whose existence is considered common knowledge in popular culture, through recognition of their profession or other widely publicized activities, on a national or international level and is frequently portrayed by the media as such... “known for being well-known” (Boorstin, 1961, p. 57).

*Celetooid*: Coined by Rojek (2001) as “any form of compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity” (Rojek, 2001, p. 20) who “are the accessories of cultures organized around mass communications and staged authenticity” (Rojek, 2001, pp. 20–21).

*Empowering positions*: “Characterized by possibilities and efforts to challenge, resist and transform hierarchic relations” (Pirinen, 1997, p. 292).

*Exo-degradation*: Outside parties (e.g., the mass media) are responsible for the celebrities ‘status stripping’ (Rojek, 2001, p. 80).

*Femme fatale*: Meaning dangerous woman in French and is furthermore defined by “the danger she poses is to the moral and ethical lives of those with whom she comes into contact” (Crawford, 2006, p. 197). Moreover, “the fatal woman, or femme fatale, is a familiar archetype: an aggressive seductress who lures her enemies into compromising situations” (Rossmann, 2003, p. 1009). Synonymous in this study with “man-eater” (Stehlin, 2005).

*Frame*: “A window on the world through which we learn of ourselves and others” (Adams & Tuggle, 2004, p. 240).

*Framing*: “As the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2007, p. 164).

*Framing analysis*: Examination of messages as they are shaped by reporters and editors (Reese, 2001).

*Framing effects*: Refers to changes in decisive outcomes resulting from alterations in media framing (Iyengar, 1991).

*Gossip*: New and/or deviant information about the traits/behaviors of others where the sender has purported insider knowledge, true or false, about the subjects of the information (De Backer, Nelissen, Vyncke, Braeckman, & McAndrew, 2007).

*Hegemony*: “A lived system of meanings and values which when experienced as practices become reciprocally confirming and accepted as natural or commonsense” (Greendorfer, 2001, p. 9).

*Magazine*: “Should contain articles or stories by different authors, and that it should be published at regular intervals, which can be any period longer than a day” (Davis, 1988, p. 3).

*Marginalization*: “Occurs when individuals or groups occupy less desirable or noncentral positions. Typically such roles or positions are less prestigious and less powerful” (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 42).

*Media framing*: Refers to the way in which a given news story is presented (Sei-Hill, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002).

*New-laddist*: “New-laddism is heavily characterized by a range of features which comfortably locate it as a present-day representation of what Connell (1987, 1995, 2000) has termed hegemonic masculinity” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 224).

*Patriarchy*: “The ideological belief in male superiority and privilege” (Greendorfer, 2001, p. 9).

*Pseudo-event*: Term coined by Daniel Boorstin (1961) to “refer to the arrangement of newsworthy events and personalities by publicists and newspaper editors” (Rojek, 2001, p. 18). It is linked to sensationalism.

*Rumor*: “A specific (or topical) proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present” (Allport & Postman, 1947, p. ix).

*Scourging*: “Refers to a process of status-stripping in which the honorific status of the celebrity is systematically degraded” (Rojek, 2001, p. 80).

*Sport-celebrity couple*: Individuals in a romantic relationship and scrutinized publicly, with the male as sport-celebrity (athlete) and the female as entertainment media celebrity (nonathlete).

*Status-stripping ceremonies*: “Are typically focused on the body” (Rojek, 2001, p. 82).

*Vortexuality*: “Certain super-major events come to dominate the headlines to such an extent that it becomes temporarily difficult for columnists and commentators to discuss anything else. They are drawn in, as if by a vortex” (Whannel, 2001, p. 143).

*Yoko Ono “effect”*: Often blamed solely for the demise of the Beatles (Friedlander, 1996). Synonymous in this study with “bad luck.”

### Importance of Study

This study of the media’s representations of the sport-celebrity couple of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo acknowledged, through illumination of the previous research on this topic and with expansion of literature on the sporting wife (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999; Whannel, 2001), the practical consequences for use in social and behavioral sciences. The increasing interest in the popular-culture celebrity phenomenon entices all facets of society to mimic their celebrity counterparts (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Boon & Lomore, 2001; Cheung & Yue, 2003; Jenkins, 1992; Maltby et al., 2003; Maltby et al., 2001; McCutcheon, 2002; North & Hargreaves, 2006; Phillips, 1974; Rustad et al., 2003; Sheridan, North, Maltby & Gillett, 2007). This study, however, placed more importance on how the media interprets these relationships, either by vilifying and victimizing them, rather than looking at the public’s fascination with celebrity. The exposure of media practices within the context of these highly publicized relationships through the channels of mainstream and sensationalist communications lent perspective to the various representations given to Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo in the study’s selected newspapers and magazines.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

The following literature review presents the principal concepts and ideologies pertaining to the inquiry of the sport-celebrity relationship of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo. The study focused upon the following: celebrity, newspapers and magazines, gossip and rumor linguistics, media framing, traditional gender roles, hierarchical structures, and hegemonic masculinity. To best comprehend the examination of this particular relationship the theories that were explored and discussed were derived from various schools of thought, which allowed for exploration beyond a sport socio-cultural perspective.

### Celebrity

As the “mass-media[s] representation is the key principle in the formation of celebrity culture” (Rojek, 2001, p. 13), celebrity in this study was representative of the mass media’s ever-present role in the creation of the celebrity who becomes a familiar figure, rising above the mere “ordinary,” “common” human being. The term celebrity is difficult to define, yet “it is equally if not more difficult to define the “ordinary,” precisely because it encompasses such a wide swath of the general population” (Holbrook & Singer, 2009, p. 37). Therefore, “it may be easiest to define the ordinary by what it is not—that is, not a celebrity” (Holbrook & Singer, 2009, p. 37). Ultimately, as Meyers (2009) concluded, “The celebrity cannot be classified as exactly the same as the average person” (p. 893), which inevitably contributes to his or her mystique.



To further delineate the celebrity from the “ordinary” individual, Rojek (2001) denoted the three forms of celerity status, “ascribed, achieved, attributed” (p. 17), which have ascended into the public sphere through various avenues whether predetermined (i.e., Caroline Kennedy, Prince William), achieved (i.e., Monica Seles) or through sensationalistic tactics employed by mass media (i.e., “ordinary” people like Luciana Morad, the mother of one of Mick Jagger’s illegitimate children”; Rojek, 2001, p. 18). Consequently, regardless of a celebrities categorization, “their plentiful public discourse significantly define[s] our culture” (Parry-Giles, 2008, p. 89).

As Rojek (2001) stated, because of three interconnected historical occurrences (a) “democratization of society, (b) the decline in organized religion, and (c) the commodification of everyday life,” celebrities have become highly-regarded individuals emerging as symbols of “recognition and belonging,” substituting for the monarchy and superseding religion. As a result of this adulation, “celebrities became immortal” (Rojek, 2001, p. 14). Furthering the pervasive role of the celebrity persona, Rojek (2001) noted,

This is why, for example, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Gandhi and Winston Churchill retain an immense aura in contemporary culture. It is also why John Wayne, dead for over 20 years, is still regularly voted to be one of the most popular movie stars in America; and why Rudolph Valentino, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy, James Dean, John Lennon, Jim Morrison, Tupac Shakur and Kurt Cobain remain idols of cult worship. (p. 14)

As the celebrity emerges as a figure perceived to be worthy of adulation, the mass media “never completely disentangles them from their larger-than-life position as celebrities” (Meyers, 2009, 893) and in doing such re-establishes the celebrities hierarchical position in society over the “commoner.”

It is to be noted that while Meyers' (2009) contention concerning a celebrity's position within the public and media is convincing, it exempts the notion of descent and/or downfall. Descent from celebrity status is closely tied to the media's controlled practices, and the public equally yearns to view, hear, and read about celebrities descending into the "common," mortal realm (Rojek, 2001). As the media has the potential to engineer a celebrity's downfall, so do celebrities have the power to engineer their own decline. As a result, this signifies a distinct separation between self-inflicted demise versus mass media controlled decline. Noting the evident separation, Rojek (2001) asserted, "celebrity descent seems to take three general forms: scourging, disintegration and redemption" (p. 80).

The process of "scourging" refers to the ceremony of "status-stripping" in which "honorific status of the celebrity is systemically degraded" (Rojek, 2001, p. 80). The ceremonious process of "status-stripping" is divided into two forms, "auto-degradation" and "exo-degradation" (Rojek, 2001, p. 80). "Auto-degradation" denotes that such stripping occurred by oneself (i.e., the celebrity), hence the prefix "auto." Conversely, "exo-degradation" denotes that external forces (i.e., the mass media) are the "architects of the status-stripping process" (Rojek, 2001, p. 80), hence the prefix "exo." As "auto-degradation" and "exo-degradation" arise differently, the similarity that exists between the both is that "status-stripping ceremonies are typically focused on the body" (Rojek, 2001, p. 82).

Rojek's (2001) notion of "scourging" assisted in the study by defining instances of "status-stripping" of the body that emerged in Simpson's and Romo's representations

in the selective media outlets. Furthermore, Rojek's (2001) notion of disintegration, which is deemed as a radical form of scourging and which "leads the celebrity to conclude that nothing can be salvaged" (i.e., resulting in suicide), was disregarded because it is outside the scope of the research. Though the concept of disintegration can be shown in the suicide of front-man of grunge-alternative rock band Nirvana, Kurt Cobain, in 1994, the application of such term is absent in the representation of Simpson and Romo during the study's selected time frame (Rojek, 2001). Additionally, Rojek's (2001) notion of redemption encompasses "the representational negotiation to restore the diminished cultural capital of the celebrity" (Rojek, 2001, p. 89). This can be observed in the example of Michael Jackson following the alleged child molestation case in 1994 where Rojek (2001) contends, "his position as the supreme idol of his day was seriously demanded" (p. 88) will not be exempt from study.

A celebrity can be represented as fallen figure attempting to revamp his or her position within the celebrity hierarchical structure. DeCardova's (2003) asserted that the "star scandal" discourse is linked to a celebrity's representation. As the "star scandal" discourse lies in the sphere of controversial narratives imbued by the mass media, this discourse was employed to acknowledge the language surrounding the narratives composed by the selected media around Simpson and Romo, both collectively and independently. The notion of redemption was utilized to establish Simpson's celebrity and cultural clout represented by the selected media following the alleged anointment of the "jinx" on December 16, 2007, it is not be insinuated that Romo is immune from being represented as a declining celebrity.

As this study was concerned with the media's representation of celebrity, it is significant to note that "the press [is] becoming ever-more inquisitive and intrusive" (Alpion, 2006, p. 553). As the media probes into the life of the celebrity, the question arises regarding authenticity and credibility of the material used by the mass media. As Rojek (2001) contended, the celebrity "presence in the public eye is comprehensively staged" (p. 13). As a result, the line between reality and illusion are blurred and as Alpion (2006) contended has been "seminal feature of the news industry from the start" (p. 546). As fact and fiction within the news become more difficult to decipher, Alpion (2006) noted that they [pseudo-events] "seem to have taken over" (p. 547). The term *pseudo-event* was introduced by Boorstin in 1961 to mean "staged and scripted events that were a kind of counterfeit version of actual happenings" (p. 4). Rojek (2001) argued that "media saturation means we now live in the age of the pseudo-event, with the result that the line between fact and fiction, reality and illusion has been erased"(p. 18). Consequently, Boorstin, who coined the term pseudo-event, probably "did not foresee the extraordinary length some journalists would go to and the sources and the means they would employ to fabricate them" (Alpion, 2006, p. 547).

Hence, the literature pertaining to the celebrity and the representations articulated within the media was relevant in navigating the manner in which representations surrounding Simpson and Romo emerged throughout the study's selected newspapers and magazines. Outlined below is the distinction between magazines and newspapers that highlights the similarities and differences between each source.

## Mass Media: Newspaper and Magazines

As Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) stated, “The mass media have become, within the past few decades, one of the most powerful institutional forces in modern society” (p. 183). In recognition of the mass media’s omnipotence Sage (1990) denoted that such power originates from constitutional protection and corporate organization. In an expansion of this assertion Sage (1990) noted,

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution, or freedom of the press . . . gives the media almost unlimited public license. Although freedom of the press is unarguably fundamental to the maintenance of a free and open society, the enormous power in this freedom can be abused. . . . In addition to their constitutional power, the media hold the power inherent in their ownership by giant corporate conglomerates. (p. 116)

While the mass media can be deemed a supreme, even unscrupulous medium, the mass media has garnered continual influence over time.

As Wimmer and Dominick (1983) noted, qualitative research encompassing newspapers and magazines, emerged in the early 1920s. Employment of such research predominately came from university scholars who implemented new methodologies utilizing magazines and newspapers and found a home for their publication in *The Journalism Bulletin* and *Journalism Quarterly* (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983). Wimmer and Dominick (1983) recalled an article by Bleyer (1924) in the inaugural issue of *The Journalism Bulletin*. In an acknowledgement of the significance of Bleyer’s (1924) article, Wimmer and Dominick (1983) argued, “Bleyer’s article was remarkably accurate in predicting the types of studies that would characterize newspaper and magazine research in the coming years” (p. 255).

As the mass media, and in this case newspapers, becomes the epitome of an “institutionalized means of answering people’s collective question, ‘what’s news?’” the producers of these sources come to be the chief determinants of what is considered newsworthy (Molotch, 1978, p. 179). As Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) suggested, “The social construction of the news is a highly selective process, forged by the values and interests of the publishers, advertisers, editors and reporters” (p. 195). Such an effect determines the end result and therefore caters to the interest of certain groups of what Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) delineated as “select members of the population- politicians, corporations, unions, and other powerful interest groups” (p. 195). Coakley (1998) asserted that “preference is often deferred to images and messages consistent with the dominant ideologies of society as a whole” (p. 368).

While prioritizing the views of select interest groups poses an inherent problem by discarding the need for and use of unbiased news reporting, Cohen (2001) argued that a contemporary dilemma is occurring, in part, to a paper’s reliance on “a feeder service that carries every news story with accompanying photos worldwide” (p. 232). Cohen (2001) furthermore noted,

In addition to services like AP, Knight Ridder, and Reuters, each major newspaper chain has their own intra-newspaper wire service. It is often easier, and more economical, to select stories from this source. Why send a reporter? Local interviews can be accomplished by phone, augmenting the wire story with a local slant. (p. 232)

In similar acknowledgment of the feeder service dilemma, Sage (1990) noted,

Concentration of power in the news industry is reflected in another way: behind most of the news in our hundreds of papers are but a few highly centralized organizations that feed stories to the locals- the wire services of the Associated

Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post. (p. 117)

Ultimately, the conformity of reports that span across this medium presented an illusion of newsworthiness, leaving the reader confident in the trustworthiness and proficiency of the source (Denton & Woodward, 1990).

The difference between newspapers and magazines, as Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) contended, exists due to the notion that “magazines can be more readily channeled toward specific segments of the population and their content, oriented toward highly specialized interest” (p. 207). As Holmes (2007) contended,

They [magazines] are almost as readily granted an important role as informers and educators; anyone wanting to acquire more knowledge about carp fishing, fashion, steam railways, home decoration, the medical profession, local government, cross-stitching, or practically anything else under the sun, can easily and relatively cheaply find or be directed to an appropriate magazine. (p. 510)

Thus as magazines become specifically focused, a magazine’s devotion to specialization becomes highly evident. In most instances a magazine’s very ability to succeed is dependent on its ability to cater to the unique interests of “various social classes and religions, age cohorts, occupational subcultures, [and] regional populations” (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 207).

As Bueno et al. (2007) noted, the specialized celebrity gossip magazine is not merely a contemporary style of publication, as “the origin of gossip magazines can be traced back to the 17th century, when salon chroniclers devoted their time to describing what happened in aristocratic ballrooms”(p. 623). What was regarded as mere insignificant, salacious information became an indication of the societal goings-on of the time. Therefore, as gossip publications became a reflection of society today, their

foundation has evolved into the present form, surrounding the private and public spheres of the celebrity (Bueno et al., 2007, p. 623). As a result, the lens becomes consumption oriented as magazines continuously depict the even the simplest things of an individual's routine, attire, and dietary regime (Buneo et al., 2007).

To differentiate between the various forms of celebrity gossip magazines Bueno et al. (2007) noted in their exploration of gossip press in Spain, the distinctiveness between upmarket gossip magazines versus the populist press. Upmarket magazines are “characterized by publishing easy-to-read articles, with many illustrations and brief texts which can be quickly read... These magazines reveal the private lives of celebrities: their stories, love affairs, successes, failures, their dressing style, or what they say” (Bueno et al., 2007, p. 625). Therefore, these stories elaborate and capture celebrities' everyday routine, and even unsophisticated undertakings become items of interest when the individuals captured are famous. Celebrities are characterized as “generally young (or at any rate they do not seem to grow old), attractive, or at least elegant, and who, of course, enjoy a wonderful life” (p. 625).

While the upmarket magazines publicize the celebrity's personal successes and career-oriented attributes, the populist press, on the contrary, has a propensity to show no “respect towards famous people, and do not regard them as different from other mortals; this is precisely their reason to criticize and mock” (Bueno et al., 2007, p. 628). These sorts of publications become engulfed in ridicule, as concern does not include “humane stories, but rather in those filled with controversy, messy affairs (separations, insults, unfaithfulness, naked bodies) and so on” (Bueno et al., 2007, p. 629). Thus the “socio-



cultural role of the magazine is contested” (Holmes, 2007, p. 510). Newspaper publications have “generally [been] accorded higher status as cultural productions” (Holmes, 2007, p. 510). Sage (1990) asserted that

[the] mass media claims of looking out for everyone, reproducing reality, and giving the public what it wants are questionable- one might even argue dangerous and misleading-half-truths that conceal how media can indeed constrain and shape public impressions and beliefs. (p. 118)

Therefore, the overview of the mass media, specifically newspapers and magazines, was relevant in deciphering the similarities and differences between each source and their employment of gossip and rumor in the representation of sport-celebrity couple Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo.

#### Gossip and Rumor Linguistics

The celebrity news story is typically capricious in nature, generally omitting information sources, or using references whose authority on the topic are suspect. This questions the true intention of such publications, whether it is the spreading of salacious truths, known falsities, or plausible uncertainties. The symbiotic nature of gossip and rumor allowed for these terms to be used interchangeably in this study; however, it is important to note the variances in each.

#### *Gossip Linguistics*

Society’s interest in celebrity has given rise to the mass consumption of media that caters to one of the most common form of contemporary gossip: celebrity sensationalism. The prevalence of gossip is not exclusive, as its pervasiveness can be seen in all facets of human existence from the “bedroom to the boardroom” (Einwiller & Kamins, 2008, p. 2248; see also Kapferer, 1990). There is an undeniable social

fascination with exploiting the secretive, private, and intimate life of the individual, especially of those whose behaviors are noticeably unbecoming (De Backer et al., 2007). Previous exploration of the long-running discourse on gossip drew striking parallels between Phillips' (2007) exploration of late-medieval England's transforming oration and historical accounts of gossip-oriented linguistic research, both of which centered on incendiary, marginalized and resistive speech (Jose, 2008). Thus, controversy surrounds the definition of gossip. Some linguists discuss to whom gossip applies and what is considered outside the scope of "idle chatter" (Noon & Delbridge, 1993, p. 25). Other linguists contend that discourse surrounding the celebrity should not be exempt from the definition of gossip (Ben-Ze'ev, 1994; Bird 1992; Davis & McLeod 2003; Levin & Kimmel 1977; Schely-Newman, 2004).

To explore further what is included when referring to gossip in the celebrity genre, specific criteria have been used to illustrate gossip as a unique form of communication (De Backer et al., 2007). First, gossip is categorized as the sender's information that can be true or false, while only the sender knows if he is indeed spreading truth or lies (De Backer et al., 2007). This illustration demonstrates that gossip depends on both its context and scope (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1985, p. 59); everything in the middle of these polar extremes of truth and falsity would be classified as rumor (De Backer et al., 2007).

To further differentiate the concept of gossip versus rumor in the celebrity genre, an understanding of the term *gossip* as both noun and verb must be established (Post, 1994). As it pertains to sport-celebrity media, gossip as a noun mirrors that of gossip in

an intimate relationship occurring between the gossipers (De Backer et al., 2007), making it more often than not reliable, albeit manipulative, information. Yet, when gossip is used as a verb in context of a celebrity who is being gossiped about, the relationship begins to break down, leading to a lack of “trust-based” interpersonal relationships such as those experienced between icon and interviewer. The act of dispersing celebrity gossip through diverse disconnected media outlets begins to lack reliability and enters the category of rumor (De Backer et al., 2007). A popular children’s game known throughout the United States as telephone, consists of a successive series of participants whispering a message down the line until the last listener reveals the unique distortion of the original message that was relayed to him or her. This example of an epistemological experiment exemplifies the tendency for information to deteriorate as it is passed along indirect lines of communication.

### *Rumor Linguistics*

Allport and Postman (1947) defined rumor as “a specific (or topical) proposition or belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present” (p. ix). Acting somewhat mechanically, the rumor begins to spiral out of control, morphing into hearsay, leaving the receiver unable to determine the validity of the fragments left behind. This frequently occurs with the general population, as rumors, saturate diverse factions of the celebrity life cycle, resulting in an opportunistic cash cow for the mass-media outlets.

The difficulty involved in the eradication of these rumors led Rosnow and Fine (1976) to note, “It is not unreasonable to forecast that a hundred years from now stories

will still be circulating” (p. 43). Similarly, Cloete (2003) noted that even historical instances pertaining to conspiracy theory, such as that describing the assassination of former United States President, John F. Kennedy and the alien-being landings near Roswell, New Mexico, illustrate the persistence of rumor in popular culture though such was expunged from academia and official historical record.

Historically, companies and organizations have been immensely vulnerable to negative rumors related to individuals, images, or concepts. For example, McDonald’s was plagued by a rumor that red worm meat was an ingredient in its hamburgers; similarly, Proctor & Gamble in the 1980s was beset with rumors that its trademark (a man in the moon surrounded by 13 stars) symbolized demon worship (Einwiller & Kamins, 2008). While Tybout, Calder, and Sternthal (1981) suggested that the use of counter arguments against the McDonald’s rumor was an ineffectual in restoring consumers’ confidence to eat McDonald’s food, other researchers have found rumor refutation tactics to be effective. Bordia, DiFonzo and Schulz (2000) illustrated that when the target of rumor was highly regarded, truthful, and ethical, rumor refutation was more effective. Iyer and Debevec (1991) argued that purposeful and active refutation through the agent of a credible source was an effective tactical strategy in countering a rumor. While Einwiller and Kamin’s (2008) study confirmed previous findings on the impact of rumor and the effectiveness of its refutation, it is crucial to note that dis-identifiers, those engaging in systematic processing, found it difficult to dismiss strong arguments, thereby becoming more susceptible to changing their belief in the rumor.

As White (1994) articulated, gossip and rumor cannot be discarded from academics, as it is relevant “to be read as hints and lenses with which to gain insight into the local contemporary context from which they emerged” (p. 82). This inevitably lent critical insight to how rumor and gossip linguistics differ and ultimately how the media frames the sport-celebrity couple of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo. Media framing is outlined in the following section.

#### Framing Theory: The Stained-Glass Window Effect

As reliance on the written and spoken word of the media continues to flood the daily lives of its consumers, the various hues contained within this “window on the world through which we learn of ourselves and others” (Adams & Tuggle, 2004, p. 240) becomes an overt illustration of how perpetuated stereotypes resist reconciliation even among seemingly reputable sources. Linguistic researchers have recently found interest in this stained glass window effect through the phenomenon of media framing (Siemer et al., 2007). The particular manner in which a story is presented is defined as media framing (Sei-Hill, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined media framing as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (p. 143). Entman (1993) further defined media framing by contending that it is a process that makes specific portions of reality salient while obscuring others, thus making it “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (p. 53).

While the framing of information is hardly a new phenomenon (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), scholarly interest in its effect has begun to peak as is noted in

Weaver's (2007) research from 1971 to 2005. From 2001 to 2005, more research studies appeared pertaining to the concept of framing theory than in the previous 30 years.

As media framing emerged in the realm of academia, Hallahan (1999), in further expansion of previous homogeneous definitions, formally denoted the way in which a frame is processed. Hallahan (1999) contended that framing created biases resulting from cognitive processing, which in turn, invoked biases derived from contextual cues and cognitive heuristics (p. 208). In a study involving a sample of American adults and college students, Rozin, Ashmore and Markwith (1996) investigated conceptions of food and nutrition as being able to translate fact into application about which foods to consume or avoid. The study illustrated that individuals implemented cognitive heuristics, regardless of accuracy, in the decision-making process on what food to consume or not to consume. It has been asserted that these sensibilities can be linked to a widely prevailing paradigm of human cogitation identified as the "sympathetic magical law of contagion" (Rozin et al., 1996, p. 446), which says that "once in contact, always in contact," exemplified in a concept where "a small amount of sugar added to a food imparts 'sugariness' to the food" (Rozin et al., 1996, p. 446). Similarly, mirroring the work of Piagetian model (Flavell, 1963), a transitional cognitive process from corporeal to transcendent thought, illustrated that children's comprehension of health derives from a systematic sequence (Tinsley, 1992).

Much like the adults in the Rozin, Ashmore and Markwith (1996) investigation, these children implemented a contagion model (Bibace & Walsh, 1980). Cognitive heuristics demonstrates the ability to affect an individual's mental processes by

enmeshing the reader in the written material of an expert (Zuckerman & Chaiken, 1998). One may contend that the unsophisticated, uniformed reader would be increasingly apt to fall for categorical thinking or cognitive heuristics. Yet, as demonstrated in the above studies, that is not the case.

While the cognitive processes which encompassed the aforesaid cognitive heuristics and contextual cue (Hallahan, 1999) were outside the scope of this particular study, this particular literature did offer insight into the overview of media framing and contributed to the recommendations for future research. While media framing involving the exploration of sport-celebrity couples is sparse, this notion further indicated the importance of exploring media framing in this context.

#### Mass Media and Gender: The Gender Gaze

Entman (1993), in conjunction with other researchers (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), theorized that repetition, resonance, and salient placement of information will greatly affect the opinions and actions of an individual. Numerous research studies also contended that the amount of exposure to media frames has a direct connection to the tendencies of audience members (Cappella & Jamieson 1997; Iyengar, 1991; McLeod & Detenber 1999; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Rhee, 1997). It is through these beliefs that hierarchical structures and traditional gender stereotypes emerge and respectively empower and dis-empower one gender over another (Pirinen, 1997).

As the mass media creates this ability to maintain societal ordinance and functioning (Fink, 1998; Krane, 1988), acting as a gatekeeper transmitting the content of what will be, “seen, heard and read”(Pedersen, 2002, p. 303), the nature of the media

seems to be omnipotent (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). This unrestricted deity, in its detrimental form, seeks preservation and continual reproduction of the hegemonic establishment (Cho, 1993; Hargreaves, 1986; McGregor, 1989), inevitably illustrating the “symbiotic” linkage between the media coverage and sport (Pedersen, 2002). As sport and media illustrate this symbiotic relationship, the notion of power and powerlessness is inherently intertwined within these discussions. Reiterating the existence of such dominant power dimensions, Kellner (1995) noted,

Media stories and images provide the symbols, myths and resources which help constitute a common culture for the majority of individuals...Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force...and who is not. (pp. 1–2)

Historically media and sport favor hegemonic ideology over that of feminist credo. The ultimate result is a lack of visibility, notoriety, and reinforced stereotypical gender roles for females. This representation has garnered scholarly inquiry during the last 35 years (Boutilier & San Giovanni, 1983; Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Brummet, 1987; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Duncan, Messner, Williams & Jensen, 1990; Dyer, 1987; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Felshin, 1974; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Higgs & Weiller, 1994; Kane, 1996; Wann, Schrader, Allison & McGeorge, 1998; Weiller & Higgs, 1999). Such scrutiny, sociologically paradigmatic in nature, has resulted in the acknowledgement and further inquiry into the underrepresentation of women within the sporting realm, where “gender ideologies are forged and contested” (Kane & Buysse, 2005, p. 216).

Messner’s (1988) theoretical framework illuminated both the political and physical ramifications of what the female body would face in the wake of post-Title IX



legislation. Messner (1988), following Willis' (1982) notion of "popular consciousness of our society," articulated "how and why organized sports have come to serve as a primary institutional means for bolstering a challenged and faltering ideology of male superiority in the 20th century"(p. 198). Acknowledging the "contradictions and ambiguities" (Messner, 1988, p. 198) throughout the epistemological pursuits of equality within the sporting context, Messner, like other researchers, (Birrell & Theberge, 1994b; Davis, 1997; Iannotta & Kane, 2002; Kane & Buysse, 2005), established the mass media's direct connection to the underrepresentation of females while promoting the prevailing gender ideologies.

The mass media transcends simplistic ideological illustrations because it is embedded with dominant cultural dogmas (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Kane, 1998; Kane & Buysse, 2005; Messner, 1988; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Wenner, 1998). It collectively "shapes, and in many cases creates, attitudes and values about women's sports participation"(Kane & Buysse, 2005, p. 215). Hence, the media praises the essence of exaggerated, inflated femininity, where "successful female athletes continue to be constructed in stereotypical and traditional conceptions of femininity that supersede their athletic ability" (Fink & Kensicki, 2002, p. 317). Such notions further emphasize that "females were significantly more likely than males to be portrayed off the court, out of uniform, and in passive and sexualized poses" (Kane & Buysse, 2005, p. 215). This overstated femininity is a reflexive "apologetic" reaction on the part of the female (Creedon, 1994; Del Rey, 1978; Felshin, 1981). Ultimately, females subscribe to such actions to lessen a sense of societal incongruence, especially in a world that exhibits

masculine prescribed traits such as control, strength, ferociousness, boldness, competitiveness, muscularity and aggressiveness as unacceptable for a female to display (Bem, 1974; Creedon, 1994; Matteo, 1988). As narratives emerge, reiterating the prevailing notion of hegemony, the male athlete is in turn framed as a dynamic human being who maintains authority his athletic agency (Duncan & Messner, 1998).

Such illustration of the existence of differences in gender construction between men and women (Martin, 1996) offers a salient aspect of one's personal and individual identity (Sharepour, 2005). Gender differences have been an evident constituent of society, specifically in the world of sport. In fact, numerous authors contend that sport reinforces male superiority and female inferiority (Birrell & Cole, 1990; Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Coakley, 1998; Creedon, 1994; Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Fink, 1998; Kane, 1996; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kane & Parks, 1992; Messner, 1988, 1992; Pirinen, 1997; Pronger, 1990; Sabo & Panepinto, 1990; Theberge, 1987; Trujillo, 1995). The role of gender inequality illustrates a hierarchical structure placing importance on the patriarchal order (Pirinen, 1997), which "constructs men as active, women as passive; men as actors, women as receivers; men as subjects, women as objects; men as the lookers, women as the looked-at" (Duncan, 1993, p. 356; see also Berger, 1972/1985; Betterton, 1987; Nead, 1987). As Kane and Greendorfer (1994) argued, feminized and sexualized portrayals of women in the media are a by-product of the "patriarchal oppression" (p. 28), where the feminized idyllic model of flawlessness ensues through the masculine gaze (Coward, 1985; Duncan, 1993; Kuhn, 1985). Through accentuation of hyper-feminized attributes, the hegemonic

gaze by the mass media voyeuristically invites a reproduction and reiteration of dominant, albeit distorted, ideologies trivializing and marginalizing the female body. It is this convergence of sport and media that “masculinity tends to be the standard against which everything else is measured” (Duncan, 1990, p. 26).

Duncan (1990), in assessing the meaning encapsulated within photographic media of the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games, established the various sexual differences connoted and reproduced within the media through the use of various poses, camera angles, physical appearances and facial expressions. Acknowledging Kuhn’s (1985) discussion of power relations with regard to soft-core pornography, Duncan (1990) noted the emphasis placed on female athletes who are positioned emphatically as supplementary or dissimilar. As a result, these actions confine the female to the periphery. For example, Duncan (1990), alluded to the postural pose of the sportsman in which the photographic image itself evokes a pleasurable, meaningful identification for the male viewer. The “pose shows a sportsman surrounded with lovely, admiring women; the man is always the focal point of this kind of picture while the women are extraneous, the cheerleaders for the male figure” (Duncan, 1990, p. 36).

Messner, Dunbar, and Hunt (2004) argued that women are exploited and employed as props for masculine appeasement where the woman fulfills both the sexualized and supportive roles. As an example, Messner et al. (2004) stated,

The wrestling shows generously used scantily clad women (e.g., in pink miniskirts or tight Spandex and high heels) who overtly displayed the dominant cultural signs of heterosexy attractiveness to escort the male wrestlers to the ring, often with announcers discussing the women’s provocative physical appearance. (p. 233)

In addition, in the 23 hours of observed sport programming, Messner et al. (2004) noted that audiences were exposed to 58 occurrences about “twice an hour on average” (p. 234) where the “sexy prop” and “sexual prize” represented the women depicted (p. 234). The connotation of such findings points to implications that depict women as “heterosexualized commodities,” the sexualized ornament, and trophy for the intention of hegemonic gratification (Messner et al, 2004, p. 234). Regardless of its novelty, evidence shows that is how women are portrayed, particularly supported by the fact that there exists a dearth of illustrations of sportswomen in the media (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Kane, 1996; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Messner et al, 2004; Wann, Schrader, Allison & McGeorge, 1998).

Kane and Greendorfer (1994) examined the female athlete’s notoriety and media visibility during the 1988 and 1992 Olympic Games compared to their male counterparts. Kane and Greendorfer noted that “few can forget images of Florence Griffith Joyner (FloJo) at the 1988 Olympics running down the track in her multicolored, high fashioned outfit” (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 28). Kane and Greendorfer (1994) further asked, “Do we remember Florence Griffith Joyner, an outstanding athlete who won three Olympic gold medals in track and field?” On the other hand, do we, as Duncan (1990) stated, remember Florence Griffith Joyner as the vogue “FloJo,” competing in “long tresses, lavish makeup and racy one-legged running suits that emphasize sexual difference?” (p. 28). King (2007) recalled the portrayal of Florence Griffith Joyner in his content analysis of male and female track and field athletes since the 1948 Olympics and claimed that such depiction may be advantageous stating that “she is able to wield more

power in that her fan base or support increases, merchandising and sponsorship opportunities develop and her financial position enables her to live comfortably outside of athletics” (p. 196). Moreover, King (2007) maintained “that this type of treatment does not necessarily undermine female sporting achievement or, indeed male sporting achievement” (p. 196).

While King’s (2007) declaration is not universally accepted, the depiction of the sportswoman is familiar to Kane and Greendorfer (1994). Kane and Greendorfer (1994), whose exploration of the depiction of female athletes in the 1992 Olympic Games found that the media, “focused on gymnasts—little pixies whose bodies were shown in graceful, aesthetic motion” (p. 28), a role that ultimately illustrates a social construction that popularizes the marginalization of the female athlete. Duncan (1990) found that 1984 Olympic Game photographs illustrating Romanian gymnasts exaggerated their petite physical stature and highlighted “their little girlness” (Duncan, 1990, p. 34). Vincent and Crossman (2007) noted in their inquiry of the construction of gender narratives about Wimbledon competitors that the media was ambivalent toward the professional tennis player, Maria Sharapova (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Wensing & Bruce, 2003). Vincent and Crossman (2007) contended that references juxtaposed “Sharapova’s athletic ability, mental determination, confidence, and strength with references to her youthful immaturity, mannerisms, foibles, and physical awkwardness [that] served to detract from her athletic accomplishment and reaffirm the gender order” (p. 90). Moreover, the prevailing notions of historical archaic depictions in the media indicate that female

sporting bodies should not be applauded for athletic prowess; rather they should be “recognized and remembered for their stereotypical gender role” (Kane, 1989, p. 61).

As Kane and Greendorfer (1994) suggested, “The relationship between sexual difference and gender difference is more than a mere association—sexual (physical) difference becomes gender (social) difference”(p. 29). The existing gender hierarchy reiterates social difference; moreover, it is one in which females are inferior to males (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Jamieson, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Kissling, 1999). Likewise, Connell (2005) asserted that accentuated archetypal femininity is employed as a means to “accommodate the interest and desires of men” (p. 37); in turn, when the media focuses on women’s sport, it serves not to advance female achievement, but “to reinforce traditional stereotypical image of femininity and female sexuality” (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 28).

In further examining the gender differences in popularized media, Miller and Summers (2007) studied video game characters represented in video gaming magazines. By coding 49 articles from various United States gaming magazines, consisting of 115 video game characters, the authors found that “males were more likely to be heroes and main characters, use more weapons, have more abilities, and were more muscular and powerful. . . females were more often supplemental characters, more attractive, sexy, and innocent, and also wore more revealing clothing” (Miller & Summers, 2007, p. 733). The Miller and Summers (2007) study revealed that the video game female characters paint a striking resemblance to previous photographic examinations of the female athlete who are portrayed as sexualized, passive, and glamorized (Duncan, 1990; Duncan &

Hasbrook, 1998; Theberge, 1987). Because the media disproportionately represents one gender over another, and images of gender are stereotypical, the media has the power to modify social tenets psychologically. For example, Berry (2003) noted that media messages have a considerable impact on young children and adolescents who are developing beliefs, assumptions, and expectations. Further, Miller and Summers (2007) noted males in video games are depicted as heroic beings while females become fragile, sexualized victims, inevitably affecting how a young child may view a gender's role during his or her formative years. Similarly, a female gamer may comprehend or assume that females are lesser beings, unable to attain self-sufficiency or assume the role of heroic characters (Miller & Summers, 2007). As prominent figures in the worlds of sport and celebrity tend to fill the gap between the fantasy world of video games and the realities of our social structure in the minds of developing children, it is the role of mass media to represent these personalities responsibly.

### Sport-Celebrity Relationship

#### *Wives, Girlfriends, and Traditional Gender Roles*

Gender characteristics play a pertinent role in shaping one's personal identity throughout his or her lifetime. The roles that we assume as members of society tend to either reinforce or erode traditional gender roles. Increasingly, "some men are househusbands; some women have high-powered jobs; some men enjoy flower arranging; some women are professional athletes" (Clayton & Harris, 2004, p. 319). Thus, the definition of *masculinity* fluctuates constantly, at times emphasizing prescribed

hegemonic traits and at other times appearing in subordinated or marginalized forms (Connell, 1995).

For young children, gender roles are force fed from the time of birth, as baby boys and girls in their respective blue and pink blankets are brought home to rooms painted in gender-assigned colors filled with gender-specific adornments. The subsequent actions taken and the parents' language become a child's guide in realizing his/her role in the world. Researchers have noted that by 3 years of age, children exhibit the ability to differentiate themselves from those of the opposite sex (Greendorfer, 2001; Jacklin & Maccoby, 1978; Sage, 1990; Wasserman & Stern, 1978). By 5 years of age, they have formulated unyielding conventions with regard to stereotypes of assigned gender roles (Schlossberg & Goodman, 1972). As the gender roles that are reinforced throughout one's adolescence last into adulthood, it is naïve to think that one can break free of these constrictive attributes.

Clayton and Harris' (2004) investigation of England's "Footballer's Wives," maintained that the construction of the masculine self is fundamentally complimented by the woman's role, noting that "the hegemonic form of masculinity present in professional football legitimizes the dominant, oppressive male sex-role, which is complemented and reinforced by authorized patterns of femininity (incorporating beauty, passivity, expressiveness and supportiveness)" (p. 321). As Thompson (1999) similarly suggested, the wives of professional athletes, become seamlessly "incorporated" into their husband's careers where the maintenance and preservation of their identity is transferred to their husband's desires, aspirations and requests. To necessitate the continuance of a



prosperous livelihood for the sake of the husband and family unit, wives and girlfriends adopted the traditional roles of caregiver, homemaker, and domesticate.

As mobility becomes a central facet of a player's career and the likeliness of trades and movement within the organization become palpable, "the player's wife is left with the burdens of moving —disconnecting the utilities, closing the bank account, removing the kids from school or camp, and then reestablishing the household in a new locality" (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001, p. 338). Furthermore, of the absence art of the husband because of career demands and commitments, the wife must operate as the cohesive parental unit, not only fulfilling the traditionally female roles of homemaker and domesticate but also the typical paternal role of disciplinarian. Ultimately as Gmelch and San Antonio (2001) noted, the wife finds herself undertaking the roles of both mother and father during the playing season (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001).

Forsyth and Thompson's (2007) inquiry illustrated the wife's adherence to traditional Western frontier roles, where inequitable division of household labor became associated with the role of rodeo wife, having a direct correlation with a husband's success and mobility. The relevancy of such unbalanced division is noteworthy, because for centuries the nature of roles customary to males or females were depicted through the allocation of housework.

A disproportionate amount of work around the house is being performed by women, as researchers noted that housework is traditionally thought to be part of a woman's duties (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Brines, 1994; Geist, 2005; Gupta, 1999; Van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994; Yodanis, 2005). Researchers have

found that when a wife is a full-time homemaker with no supplementary income, the husband partakes less in household labor and chores (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Cooke, 2004; Shelton, 1990). In examining instances where men aided in household chores, Treas (2008) noted that “men subscribe to “masculine” tasks like home maintenance, automobile upkeep and yard work while the wife performs the more time-intensive, routine “feminine” jobs like cleaning, cooking and laundry” (p. 263). Such a paradox can be described as “gender manufactured through domestic interaction” (Treas, 2008, p. 262). As females find worth in exuding femininity, males find esteem in exhibiting masculinity, and in the event of the occasional display of nontraditional gender roles, it is noted that “even if they violate breadwinner norms, husbands can reassure themselves and others of their masculinity by avoiding “women’s work” around the house” (Treas, 2008, p. 263).

Gmelch and San Antonio’s (2001) noted that where the husband rigidly adhered to the masculine routine, the wife was left alone to function as the domesticated. They noted that “even when the team is at home, husbands are not around the house much” (p. 341), stating, “in short, a player’s schedule does not mesh well with the needs of a family” (p. 341). Thompson’s (1999) examination of the functions of a National Hockey League wife concluded that, “the women in this study appear to lead very traditional lifestyles in which they were responsible for domestic work, childbearing and rearing, and emotionally supporting their husbands” (p. 188). As a consequence, the conservation of hegemonic ideals, mirroring that of the sport itself, are championed by the husband’s career and such a notion becomes inescapable for the wife in part because of prescribed

gendered roles (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999).

While the husband is anointed as the breadwinner, the wife becomes an extension of her husband's self-image and occupation. Personal identity or the lack thereof, for the wife of an athlete becomes a proverbial notion highlighted by previous researchers (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). Furthermore, Gmelch and San Antonio (2001) stressed,

Marilyn Monroe aside, the baseball wife's identity is submerged under that of her husband. He is seen as the breadwinner, and if he is in the major leagues, he probably earns more in a year than she will in a lifetime. He is the limelight; he is in demand. (p. 347)

Clayton and Harris (2004) similarly asserted Victoria Beckham was also an exception and stated that

While Victoria Beckham may be somewhat different to other wives, particularly in the way she contributes to her husband's identity. David Beckham's courtship and subsequent marriage to Victoria Adams in July 1999 was a defining moment in the construction of his character. Victoria (aka 'Posh Spice' from the all-girl pop group the Spice Girls) was already a wealthy celebrity in her own right. At this time she had a greater personal wealth than Beckham, and was a higher-grade celebrity. (p. 328)

Ultimately, possessing characteristics contrary to the archetypal sporting wife and girlfriend, Victoria Beckham's was not void of analogous traits of the supporter, the devotee.

In his autobiographic book, David Beckham acknowledged Victoria's loss of self and occupational routine upon the arrival of their first born son, Brooklyn. Beckham noted,

Brooklyn's first few months were tough on Victoria. She'd worked so hard for so long with the Spice Girls and had put so much into a successful career, and then, all of a sudden, she had to stop and focus all her energy and attention instead on this tiny new baby who was completely dependent on her. (Beckham & Watt, 2003, p. 159)

In acknowledgment of the implications of halting one's personal routine, Beckham (2003) noted, "It's not like it wasn't what Victoria wanted to be doing but it was a giant shock to the system" (p. 159). Ultimately, the effects of such transition left Victoria in a purgatory-like state stuck between her family, her husband's needs and her career aspirations. Victoria, similar to the archetypal sporting wife (Clayton & Harris, 2004), mirrored the notion of women being positioned as supplementary characters (Duncan, 1990). Such position articulated the need to forgo one's personal needs for the needs of the husband and family unit (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). Such an existence for Victoria meant departing London and moving away from friends and family to support David's English football career in Manchester (Beckham & Watt, 2003). For other sporting wives it is the expectation to, "engage in charity work on behalf of the team, and to follow team rules against traveling with their husbands, or meeting husbands in cities where the team was playing" (Thompson, 1999, p. 182). Moreover, these assertions label the wives and girlfriends as both mobile and immobile beings, where their lives are navigated and decided upon by their husband's career (Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). Whether it is relocation, a simple photo-op for the team's philanthropic endeavors, or adherence to management's guidelines for wives and

girlfriends, the concept of appeasement for the husband's sake becomes palpable. As Beckham (2003) reported,

From April 1999 onwards, I was playing two games a week, which made trips to London pretty difficult to squeeze in. That was part of the reason Victoria decided to bring Brooklyn north when she did. It meant so much to me, having them there while the season flew by, getting more and more intense as each match came and went. I'd rush home afterwards and there would be my boy and his mum, waiting for me. (pp. 159–160)

Operating as “marriage workers,” (Ortiz, 2005, p. 273) during the particularly stressful and taxing times of the season, the wives are supposed to provide support and assistance to their husbands compassionately and sensitively (McCubbin et al., 1980; Ortiz, 2002, 2005). Unfortunately, as Ortiz (2005) argued, the reciprocation of support is little, if not absent within the husband's routine.

The professional male athlete seeks a domestically apt partner who can meet the expectations of both the media and fans alike that his woman be an aesthetically pleasing beauty (Morris, 1981). Clayton and Harris (2004) pointed out the “pin-up wife” of the British Television program drama, “Footballer's Wives.” Clayton and Harris (2004) argued that “all tend to conform to a particular pattern of looks and idiosyncrasies; they are slim, attractive and with tanned complexion, complementing their ‘natural’ femininity with glamorous and often skimpy outfits” (p. 323). Albeit a fictitious television drama, the parallels shown draw striking resemblances to partnerships within the physical world.

In her 2005 autobiographical novel, Jessica Canseco, a former Hooters restaurant waitress, opens the first chapter of her narrative with a recollection of her first encounter with future spouse, the notoriously ill-tempered slugger, Major League Baseball player José Canseco. Upon meeting, José (2005) noted her attire. Wearing nearly nonexistent

bright orange shorts and a suggestive top designed to accentuate her ample bosom, as was the standard Hooters attire, Canseco (2005) contended that her sexual desire fed Jose's insatiable appetite as she recollected him asking, "How about your phone number?" (p. 5). Canseco (2005) further noted, "He called Hooters a couple of hours later and asked if I'd meet him at the Radisson hotel when I got off work" (p. 7). Invariably, for José, Jessica represented the archetypal feminine beauty, the "sexy prize" (Messner et al., 2004) inevitably embodying Gmelch and San Antonio's (2001) contention that "baseball wives and girlfriends are expected to look attractive, and most are" (p. 345).

Clayton and Harris (2004) described Katie Price (a. k. a. Jordan; her pseudonym), a well-endowed "page-3 darling," and her relationship with Blackburn Rovers' footballer Dwight Yorke in a similar manner. While emphasizing the fame she garnered independently, Clayton and Harris (2004) expressed that

while not all of the articles relating to Jordan, in our analysis, focus upon this relationship, the footballer habitually gains a mention, as if to suggest their relationship was the defining moment of her celebrity, and of his off-the-pitch identity. (p. 326)

Jordan's womanliness and physical attributes, particularly the size of her breasts, were a centralized aspect of her media fame together with her footballer. Furthermore, Clayton and Harris (2004) noted that "in a world where men, allegedly, are attracted to big-breasted women, extolling the virtues of 'laddism,' Yorke may gain recognition (among men) for his very public sexual attachment to her" (p. 326).

Adulation from their male audience and the media alike are not uncommon for women of archetypal beauty, for as the male athlete partakes in a sexualized romantic relationship, he is afforded a sense of greater control and higher status in the order of his

masculine domain. In extension of such notion, Clayton and Harris (2004) noted, though Victoria Beckham, atypical in many mannerisms compared to the sporting wife norm, is reflective of the quintessential archetypal footballer's spouse in terms of physical appearance. As Clayton and Harris (2004) argued, her emergence in numerous men's publications during her association with the popular group, The Spice Girls, garnered her a male-fan following. Such sexualized portrayal provided David Beckham, "some affiliation with traditional notions of working class masculinities, which the tabloid press regularly convey[s]" (p. 329). As a result, there is an evident correlation between the woman's adherence to archetypal standards and the rendering that the man will receive in the public and private domains (Forsyth & Thompson, 2007). Abandonment of such standards by the wife or girlfriend would situate the male among the realm of the de-valued, emasculated man (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002).

Inevitably, the sporting wife and girlfriend surfaced as the gap filler, which the media and fans utilized to enhance or reduce the husband's sense of maleness. Nonetheless, the sporting wife is not free from facing such fluctuation amongst a multitude of representations. As Clayton and Harris (2004) contended, Victoria Beckham's representation was both contradictory and complimentary to the ideal footballer's wife. As these women fill the gaps to compliment or contradict the gendered order within the realm of sport and society alike, the representation of Jessica Simpson, through previous researchers' contentions, illustrated a direct link to Tony Romo's success (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Whannel, 1999, 2001).

### *The Femme Fatale and the Yoko Ono Effect*

The figures of the sporting wife and girlfriend represent an amalgam of both the archaic values and the traditionalized gender function. Adhering to a gender standard, the wife and girlfriend in turn mirrored the gendered order as previously noted. Moreover, in perscribing to such norms or “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987), the female garners acknowledgment and applause for such duties even though very little support is reciprocated by her male partner (Ortiz, 2005). A divisive action on the part of the female becomes disadvantageous albeit similar to the representation of sportswomen who stray or do not subscribe to the notion of displaying hyperfemininity. The sporting realm lauds masculinity and the normalized displays of belligerence, control, hostility and coercion (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1987; Messner, 1990, 1992; Ortiz, 2005; Pronger, 1990; Trujillo, 1995; Whannel, 1998; Wheaton, 2000). According to Ortiz (2005), “Male professional athletes, doing the “right” masculinity is expected, shared, validated, and normalized in their occupational lives and quite evident in their marital lives” (p. 270). As the female digresses from the traditionalized, subscribed roles, upsetting the patriarchal order, the female is branded as a deviant, disruptive being.

The notion of deviance and the atypical being is evident in the conception of the femme fatale. Females who outwardly exhibit characteristics that are discordant with the accepted and agreed upon gender norms of society are described as femme fatales who are dangerous to those with whom they comes in contact (Crawford, 2006). Moreover, “the fatal woman, or femme fatale, is a familiar archetype: an aggressive seductress who lures her enemies into compromising situations” (Rossmann, 2003, p. 1009).



An array of exposés of the femme fatale emerged in “Western plastic and literary arts worlds” (Crawford, 2006, p. 197). Feminist pundits, specifically in discussion of the tropes of film noir, have acknowledged the “ideological power of the femme fatale” (Grossman, 2007, p. 19). The pundits also have acknowledged the femme fatale with regard to the fear she evokes and the desire she projects (Grossman, 2007, p. 19), rendering these women as erotic muses (Allen, 1983) who are “fast-talking dames in pencil skirts and seamed stockings, exhaling cigarette smoke as they misdirect our heroes” (Rossmann, 2003, p. 1009).

Sherwin (2008) scrutinized the femme fatale in the 1987 thriller, *Fatal Attraction*. The film’s narrative explored a short-lived affair between a married man and a woman named Forrest. Sherwin (2008) contended that Forrest is the “quintessential femme fatale, the sexually dangerous woman” (p. 175) and as the movie proceeds with her rebuffing the man’s the notion to disappear, “she becomes increasingly intrusive and threatening: she calls him at work, turns up at his home, pours acid on his car, cooks his daughter’s pet rabbit, kidnaps his daughter, and finally tries to kill his wife” (Sherwin, 2008, p. 175). The femme fatale wields this desired and feared manifestation over the male body where she is capable of employing her sexual prowess in an advantageous manner affording her an opportunity to live out her desires.

Crawford (2006) depicted the parallels in hard-boiled detective fiction and asserted that “the femme fatale has dynamic sexual magnetism, is extremely ambitious, shrewd, and calculating, and while she strategically aligns herself with others, especially powerful males, she keeps her distance emotionally” (p. 197). Furthermore, as Crawford

(2006) argued, the femme fatale characters hemmed within the fictitious narratives, have an innate comprehension on how to negotiate themselves in an environment of maleness and inexorably, “they are able to determine the nature of men’s needs, weaknesses, and desires to such a profound extent that they can become master manipulators of men and the money and/or cultural capital the men command” (Crawford, 2006, p. 197).

Consequently, the femme fatale navigates the man’s existence, employing a modus operandi to ultimately fulfill a yearning and need for clout within the relationship. This notion illustrates that as the femme fatale garners dominion over the male body, he in turn is represented as feeble and emasculated.

Depicting the belief of weakened male agency on behalf of the female, Whannel (2001) uses the relationship of David and Victoria Beckham, where he noted “the suggestion is that Victoria dominates him; that his clothes are chosen by her; that this is un-masculine; that he looks like a prat, a wally” (p. 141). Ultimately, this remark has a disadvantageous bilateral effect on both parties. As Victoria Beckham asserts autonomy and authority, she is framed negatively for the disruption of patriarchal order; in turn, David Beckham garners public hostility for endangering the “masculinity favoured in English football culture” (Whannel, 2001, p. 141).

Similarly, Jackson’s (2001) examination of Canadian professional hockey player Wayne Gretzky, “The Great One” (p. 164), explored the particular actions (i.e., the trade to the Los Angeles Kings and marriage to an American) which were to be interpreted as Americanization and furthermore a national identity crisis for Canada’s hero. Gretzky’s marriage to the American actress, Janet Jones drew linkage to the North American Free

Trade Agreement and became “symbolic of the feared excessively close political, economic, and cultural ties Canada will have with the USA” (Jackson, 2001, p. 174).

Jackson (2001) asserted,

The Canadian “Royal Wedding,” while reaffirming Gretzky’s noble status, also evoked a fear that was to become a reality later in the year-perhaps this “Hollywood Princess” would lure the King from his Canadian castle, which would result in his eventual abdication. (p. 173)

As Gretzky downplayed his relationship with the American actress and Playboy centerfold, “it was implied that Gretzky is not being true to his roots; that he is selling out to the USA”( Jackson, 2001, p. 174). Yet, the notion of Jones luring Gretzky from his home country, where the national press had created a “Gretzky dynasty,” caused her to be portrayed disadvantageously.

Correspondingly, portrayals of Yoko Ono, former spouse of deceased English rock musician and Beatle, John Lennon exemplified congruent notions to the deviant, autonomous woman. As Wiener (1998) stated, Ono acquired notoriety and adulation on her own behalf through her avant-garde compositions, her work *Grapefruit* and as a member of Fluxus, “an international group developing conceptual art” (Wiener, 1998, p. 5). Yoko Ono, as Weiner (1998) contended, offered Lennon “an alternative life as a Beatle” (Wiener, 1998, p. 5). Wiener (1998) stated,

She was a woman in a man’s world and a Japanese person in an Anglo-American world. Passionately dedicated to her work and challenging the barriers of the white male New York art scene, she had to be courageous and strong. Lennon had never met such a woman. (p. 7)

Fawcett (1980) noted that Beatle devotees and media alike objected to Lennon’s martial separation from his first wife Cynthia Powell and his involvement with Yoko.

Miles (2004) similarly noted that Lennon's band mates, particularly Ringo Starr, felt deflated by Ono and intimidated by her presence at recording studio sessions where "John insisted that Yoko sit next to him on the piano stool and accompany him to the bathroom" (Miles, 2004, p. 354). Consequentially, as Miles (2004) argued, the actions on the part of Yoko, "caused the creative bubble in which the Beatles worked on to be broken" (p. 354) and therefore, critics as Friedlander (1996) noted, "appear to minimize John's avant-garde personal and artistic propensities, his marital boredom, and the experiences and education that Yoko had to offer" (Friedlander, 1996, p. 94). That was the reason why fault was placed exclusively on Yoko and not John.

David Beckham (2003) recorded an incident surrounding the 1998 France World Cup where he was temporarily dismissed from the English team because of his relationship with Victoria. Denoting the occurrence in which his team's manager, Glenn Hoddle said, "I don't think you're focused" (Beckham & Watt, 2003, p. 129), Beckham pinned down the origin of his release from the team:

Victoria flew out to France for the day and the two of us spent our time around the apartment complex swimming, sunbathing and catching up. Glen didn't like that. The other players were on the golf course. And I wasn't. (Beckham & Watt, 2003, p. 129)

Repressed and restrained by the misogynistic culture their partners inhabited, Victoria and Yoko Ono symbolized the belief that society will find fault with the female body that deviates from societal customs. The personae of femme fatales such as Yoko Ono and Victoria Beckham dictated the need to be repressed by societal roles and constraints (Grossman, 2007).

### Hegemonic Exaltation: The Male Athlete and Sporting Star

Hegemony, “refers to a cultural process of domination” (Bridges, 2009, p. 88) and can be further clarified in Adamson’s (1980) definition as “a process of continuous creation which, given its massive scale, is bound to be uneven in the degree of legitimacy it commands and to leave some room for antagonistic cultural expressions to develop” (p. 174). Conceived of through the notion of Gramscian hegemony, hegemonic masculinity, illustrates femininity and divergent male representations as inferior (Connell, 1987). Hanke (1990) defined hegemonic masculinity as “the social ascendancy of a particular version or model of masculinity that, operating on the terrain of ‘common sense’ and conventional morality, defines ‘what it means to be a man’” (p. 232).

Hegemony presents portrayals encompassing “inter-group variation (e.g., men relative to women)” and “intra-group relations (e.g., men relative to other men)” (Bridges, 2009, p. 84) where the marginalization and subordination of both masculinity and femininity become evident. As Beynon (2002) stated,

men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up: rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour (sic) which they learn to reproduce in socially appropriate ways. (p. 2)

Thus, actions of hegemony do not garner exaltation “because they are hegemonic; they are hegemonic because we exalt them” (Bridges, 2009, p. 91). This exaltation reinforces the ideal form of hegemonic masculinity that encompasses traits of forcefulness, assertiveness and more importantly heterosexuality (Connell 1999, 2005). The attainment of the ideal masculinity is as Kimmel (2001) contended, “constant, relentless, unachievable” (p. 269).

Connell (1987) expressed that sport provides an arena conducive to the production, generation and reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity. Illustrating this notion, Connell (1987) asserted,

the combination of force and skill that is involved in playing well at games like football, cricket and baseball...becomes a model of body action that has much wider relevance than the particular game. Prowess of this kind becomes a means of judging one's degree of masculinity. (pp. 84–85).

As Vincent and Crossman (2007) noted, “men typically attain an athletic dividend by participating in athletics, boosting their performance of masculinity” (p. 82), ultimately insinuating that sport is a “primary masculinity-validating experience” (Dubbett, 1979, p. 164). Hence this is the reason why males partake in “highly combative sports like football, rugby, or hockey” rather than “aesthetic sports traditionally viewed as feminine, such as dance and figure skating” which are “devalued for males” (Johnson & Holman, 2009, pp. 6–7).

In Western society, weakness, frailty and dependence are equated to a woman, whereas strength, dominance and power equate to the male physicality and psyche (Messner, 1988). This notion perpetuates the stereotype that, as a rule, the male body has the intrinsic capability to throw further, jump higher, and run more quickly than a female body (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). As the male body, particularly that of the professional sporting star, is exalted within the mass media, the male body is in turn “expected to be muscular, strong, and “fit” (Bridel & Rail, 2007, p. 131). It is therefore the “socially elite, White, Western, heterosexual, able-bodied males” which garner the greatest acknowledgment, adulation and “social prestige” when highlighting and representing what is truly hegemonic masculinity (Vincent & Crossman, 2007, p. 82).

As Messner (1988) noted, specific arenas of life and particularly that of sport have represented the male body as a symbol of “strength, virility, and power” (p. 202); such a depiction can also be noted within the realm of football (Messner, 1988). Representative of ideological dominant themes of “patriotism, militarism, violence, and meritocracy” (Messner, 1988, p. 202), football, denoted for its brutality (Pronger, 1990) becomes an exemplar of the male sporting body that parades muscularity, “explosive power and aggression” (Messner, 1988, p. 202). Often these descriptors parallel war-like metaphors (Bernstein & Blain, 2003; Sabo & Jansen, 1994; Trujillo, 1995; Vincent, 2004), which provide males a heightened sense of masculinity. Employment of these descriptors, as Sabo and Jansen (1994) noted, “are crucial rhetorical resources for mobilizing the patriarchal values that construct, mediate, maintain, and, when necessary, reform or repair hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity” (p. 1). Thus, as Trujillo (1995) contended, hegemonic masculinity is not a “unitary form of male domination” but rather represents a controlled, disputed form of domination that is “open to potential contradictions, ironies, and paradoxes” (p. 405).

Therefore, “hegemony is not static” (Sage, 1990, p. 16) and is dissimilar to other ideologies in that it allows for continuous flux in representations (Gramsci, 2005; Williams, 1977). Hence, as “US sport heroes of yesteryear, including Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle and Joe Namath” often are associated with “heroism, courageousness” and their “cultural significance” (McDonald & Andrews, 2001, p. 28), other sporting heroes, akin to David Beckham have been equated with the emasculated male (Whannel, 2001, p. 140). As Cashmore and Parker (2003) asserted, “There are aspects of David Beckham’s

lifestyle and persona that, in the eyes of the cursory observer, are the antithesis of these traditional values. To this end, “Beckham’s a contradiction in terms” (p. 223).

McDonald and Andrews (2001) noted that “this canonization is hardly new, as sport has long been tied to the glorification of masculinity and male bodies” (p. 28).

As a contemporary illustration, Michael Jordan and his physical prowess have been repeatedly paralleled the mythological masculinity portrayed in action blockbuster movies (McDonald & Andrews, 2001). Moreover, according to McDonald and Andrews (2001), the depiction of Jordan to that of “Sylvester Stallone as Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator” positioned Jordan to be an exalted being, a hegemonic male. This mythic-like congruence, as McDonald and Andrews (2001) noted, illustrated Jordan’s physicality as a “masculine hard body, strong, competitive and brave” (p. 29). Jordan’s depiction legitimized him as a symbol of manliness; David Beckham, on the other hand, was not represented similarly.

As Whannel (2001) asserted, resentment towards Beckham stemmed from his departure from the accepted form of masculinity as English football “despises any deviation from heterosexual orientation” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 223). Moreover, Whannel (2001) asserted the cause of such abuse was embedded in three factors—“the hatred of Manchester United prevalent among football fans, the tall poppy factor, and Beckham’s sending off in the 1998 World Cup” (p. 140). All of these factors denoted Beckham as a “sacrificial victim,” a “scapegoat,” “slightly floppish,” “feminized” and “emasculated” (Whannel, 2001, pp. 140–141). Whannel (2001) cited that Beckham’s downfall came because “Victoria dominates him, that his clothes are chosen by her” (p.



141). Therefore, his actions, which stemmed from “new laddism” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003), presented his masculinity in a mannerism that “contradicts, confuses and conflates all in one” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 225). Furthermore, Cashmore and Parker (2001) noted Beckham embodied the “‘new man’ (nurturer, romantic, compassionate partner)” (p. 225) and, the “‘new lad’/ ‘dad-lad’ (soccer hero, fashionable father, conspicuous consumer- some would argue all around, cosmetically conscientious ‘metrosexual’” (p. 225).

Cashmore and Parker (2003), continuing to depict Beckham as the antithesis of the archetypal sporting star, contended that Beckham demonstrated vestiges of the “old industrial” breadwinning man with traits of loyalty, devotion, and stoicism. This illustrated Connell’s (2005) conception that masculinity can be solely dependent on time and place, while either exalting or marginalizing the man. Furthermore, the media’s quintessential portrayal of Romo recognizes the notion of hegemony and hegemonic masculinity.

#### The Dallas Cowboys: Football and Masculinity

As Sabo (1994) stated, “Becoming a football player fosters conformity to male-chauvinistic values and self-abusing lifestyles” (p. 87). Former Dallas Cowboys players in the early 1990s were noted as an unparalleled team and furthermore as an NFL dynasty, with a roster of sporting stars including, quarterback, Troy Aikman, running back, Emmitt Smith, wide receiver, Michael Irvin, and cornerback, Deion Sanders; the greatness that existed was undermined by excessive drinking, drug consumption, late-night gallivanting, womanizing, groupies (i.e., jersey chasers), and inflated egos (Bayless,

1996; Pearlman, 2008). As the Dallas Cowboys epitomized the “the image of badness as “fun” – drinking too much, missing training, being generally undisciplined, and getting away with it,” their actions, both individually and collectively were deemphasized, lauded and even viewed as socially acceptable (Whannel, 1999, p. 261). Whannel (1999) stated that “more socially reprehensible ‘badness’ – the treatment of women by Mike Tyson, Paul Gascoigne, Geoffrey Boycott, and O. J. Simpson” was deemed unfavorable and attached to negative social consequences and stigmas (Whannel, 1999, p. 261).

Pearlman (2008) reported that on March 4, 2006, in a hotel room in Dallas, Texas, police arrived to find Michael Irvin and former teammate Alfredo Roberts surrounded “with two strippers, 10.3 grams of cocaine, more than an ounce of marijuana, and assorted drug paraphernalia and sex toys” (p. 2). Throughout Irvin’s probation, suspension, and sentencing to community service, Irvin continued to be celebrated as a leader, a dedicated man to his team and teammates where “no one served as a better teammate—as a better role model” (Pearlman, 2008, p. 2). As Whannel (1999) contended, “men behaving badly may be nothing new, but the resurgence of a celebratory and uncritical attitude towards such behaviour marks a shift in a more general trend of successes in battles against sexism” (p. 257).

Pearlman (2008) noted that it was in a culmination of “gridiron supremacy and the American game and football immortality” that the Dallas Cowboys players “overtaken the town” of Los Angeles for Super XXVII (p. 166). Women donning risqué outfits parading “their wares like peacocks at a petting zoo” (p. 166) and parties attended by barely clothed women typified Whannel’s (1999) notion of women as distractions or

furthermore “bad influences.” Whannel (1999) noted that the women of “bad influence” encompassed the “blonde, disco-going, thrill-seeking, or over-feminizing” (p. 262). The women who represented the “good influence” included the “wife, mother, home-maker, supportive, and ‘gives him space’”(Whannel, 1999, p. 262). Even though Irvin’s wife, Sandy was representative of what Whannel (1999) emphasized as the “good influence,” Pearlman (2008) reported that Irvin strayed from his marriage and family life to spend time with strippers, party with groupies and prostitutes. As Pearlman (2008) emphasized the Dallas Cowboy player’s off-field antics, he similarly noted the coach’s and owners condoning of this activity by stating that

When Jones purchased the Cowboys and agreed to have American Airlines continue to serve as the team’s transportation provider, the deal came with the caveat that a Dallas representative be allowed to select the airplane crews...airline supervisors were told to approach beautiful flight attendants, make certain they were single, and solicit them to work Cowboy charters. (p. 198)

That football is based on the male exhibition of power and control where women are confined to the sidelines as spectators, cheerleaders, and sexualized objects, provided “testimony to the undeniable “fact” that there is at least one place where men are clearly superior to women” (Messner, 1988, p. 202).

As salaciousness surrounded the early 1990s Dallas Cowboys organization, it is to be noted that during this time in 1992, 1993, and 1995, three Super Bowl trophies were won (Bayless, 1996; Pearlman, 2008). During this time, Troy Aikman, a man with “classic Hollywood looks, good ol’ boy charm, and an \$11 million contract” emerged amongst the opulence and nightlife lifestyle of many of the Cowboys as the “anti-stereotype” (Pearlman, 2008, p. 51). Whereas most sporting stars are “the geese that laid

golden eggs” basking in the limelight, motivated by individuals continuously fueling their egos (Whannel, 1999, p. 258), Aikman was different because he favored life outside the spotlight.

As Pearlman (2008) noted, Aikman preferred simplicity to extravagance and a “few cold Budweisers and a flick on the VCR to a night on the town” (p. 51). That positioned Aikman contradictory to teammate Emmitt Smith who sought more money and a larger contract (Pearlman, 2008). Aikman spoke minimally to the press, dated but was not considered a “playboy”; this positioned him to be represented on the basis of his physical ability and proficiency, which mirrored the description of what denotes a capable quarterback (Bayless, 1996; Pearlman, 2008). As a result, Aikman’s representation became the definition of a good football player.

According to Davis (1990) “player evaluation and selection was first begun by the Dallas Cowboys in 1962” (p. 4). While numerous football organizations have adopted this and applied formal axiology to player evaluation that “imitate that of the Cowboys, it is generally recognized that the Cowboys have had, at least until recently, the best scouting and draft program among the pros” and have “develop[ed] the elusive art of evaluating talent into a science” (Davis, 1990, p. 4). Developing a questionnaire to define and measure the intangible attributes of what is considered or deemed a good football player by constructing phrases that “spelled out what was meant by character, competitiveness, and so on” (Davis, 1990, p. 7), the Dallas Cowboys “have successfully defined football player” (Davis, 1990, p. 7).

As Davis (1990) noted, a “good quarterback is one that has all the properties that a quarterback is defined to have—poise, leadership, quick to set up, ability to time pass” (Davis, 1990, p. 11). Mandelbaum (2004) further noted that a quarterback

must be able to scan the field in front of him, with players running in all directions, pick out a likely receiver for his pass, and throw it to the designated (and moving) target accurately, all the while contending with large, menacing players from the defense struggling to push past his protective screen of blockers and knock him to the ground. (p. 162)

A quarterback must not only possess athletic prowess but also cerebral qualities to create fast-thinking, quick decisions on the field (Mandelbaum, 2004). Acknowledging quarterback Troy Aikman as the embodiment of “America’s favorite team” (i.e., Dallas Cowboys) Bayless (1996) stated,

Aikman was made to be a Cowboy: He looks like he could have ridden in with Gus and Call from Lonesome Dove. He could be Gary Cooper’s son. He has an NFL reputation for being as tough as Eastwood was in any of his “man with no name” Westerns. Aikman, the strong, silent type, usually lets the bullets he throws do his talking. (p. 4)

This particular literature on the Dallas Cowboys helped to navigate Romo’s representation, not strictly in regards to his current position as the Dallas Cowboy’s quarterback but by acknowledging Whannel’s (1999) notion that “flamboyance and aggression, individualism, idiosyncrasy and unpredictability, the loss and recovery of magical powers, and vulnerability all play a role in the construction of star-narratives in the popular press, in magazine profiles, and in biographies”( p. 258). The literature also served as an addition to the research pertaining to the archetypal sporting spouse, hegemonic masculinity, and gender hierarchical structures.

## Summary

The review of literature acted as precursor to navigating the conception that past patterns play an integral part in the future, a popular notion by constructionist theorists which is emphasized by exemplifying Ancient Rome in speculation of whether the same demise is ahead for modern America. Consequently this poses the question: if the general public and media alike seemingly cannot get enough of the melodrama associated with these often larger-than-life romantic match ups, would the media's representations of Simpson and Romo be a reiteration of past representations?

Additionally, the review of literature outlined the fundamental characteristics and integral concepts used to explore the media depiction of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo. In doing so, the groundwork was laid to permit further expansion of these ideas, allowing for the creation of new concepts rooted in similar principles as they arise during the research.

The review of literature espoused notions such as female repression due to patriarchy (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994), sport as a conduit for masculine affirmation (Dubbert, 1979), and the embodiment of the truly hegemonic male (Vincent & Crossman, 2007) that celebrates “the dramatic achievements of the best males, while marginalizing females as cheerleaders and spectators” (Kidd, 1987, p. 255). Additionally, the quelling of the deviant women (i.e., femme fatale and Yoko Ono) in the literature confirmed the male position of importance within an array of societal facets (Kidd, 1987).

Literature pertaining to the celebrity emphasized the separation between the celebrity and the “ordinary” human being (Holbrook & Singer, 2009; Meyers, 2009;

Parry-Giles, 2008; Rojek, 2001) and was further understood by Boorstin's (1961) classification of a celebrity. The representation of the celebrity within the mass media illuminated the media and its practices in regards to gossip and rumor (Allanport & Postman, 1947; Cloete, 2003; Rosnow & Fine, 1976; White, 1994) and media framing (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999; Messner & Solomon, 1994; Seihill, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002;), while underscoring the manner in which it was used within this study's selected media, magazines, and newspapers.

Additionally, scholarly inquiry surrounding sport-celebrity coupling, with the exception of Cashmore and Parker (2003), Clayton and Harris (2004) and Whannel (2001, 2002) is scarce. The literature that analyzes the sporting wife/girlfriend (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999; Whannel, 2001) and the male sporting star (Cashmore & Parker, 2003; Whannel, 2001, 2002; McDonald & Andrews, 2001) is essential in recognizing and acknowledging the mass media's characteristic representations.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology with specific focus on the textual content contained within the selected newspaper and magazines sources. Implementation of a textual analysis was chosen as “it recognizes a fundamental assumption: that meaning is a social production” (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000, p. 315). Therefore, as Acosta-Alzuru and Lester-Roushanzamir (2000) argued, the objective of the textual analysis is not simply the realization of the meaning behind the text, but rather the ways in which the text itself is presented or constructed. To develop an understanding of the media’s representation of the sport-celebrity relationship between Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo, a textual analysis, which utilized a research sample of 100 magazine and 100 newspaper articles dated from December 17, 2007, the time of the first publicized notion of the “Jessica Simpson jinx,” to April 15, 2009, was implemented.

Given the publicity and moreover what Whannel (2001) deemed as the vortexuality surrounding singer-actress Jessica Simpson and Dallas Cowboys quarterback, Tony Romo, their particular partnership served as a good case study of how the media has characterized the sport-celebrity relationship. The fact that Simpson and Romo’s celebrity extended beyond that of local or regional celebrities, garnering them national recognition within the United States, also served as a factor in the selection of this particular pairing to explore the context of their media coverage.



For the purposes of this study, a sport-celebrity relationship is defined as the male being a professional athlete and the female being a mass media celebrity (nonathlete). This delineation for the titling of sport-celebrity relationship, however, is not an insinuation that Simpson is the only national celebrity and Romo is merely a local celebrity or not a celebrity at all. The exploration of Simpson and Romo within the selected mediums, magazines and newspaper, served to further define the representation of the standard sport-celebrity couple where both garner national recognition.

The selection criteria of media were based on the characteristics as follows:

1. Media should strictly encompass magazines and newspapers (see Table 1);
2. The media selection could be from both local and national (United States) outlets to provide differing perspectives (McCombs et al., 1991);
3. Date of production occurring between December 17, 2007, coinciding with the first publicized notion of the “Jessica Simpson jinx” through April 15, 2009.

Primarily, the selections of the various newspapers were selected for utilization on the basis of their geographical distribution area. While the selection primarily represented nationally distributed resources, *The Dallas Morning News* particularly represented a local publication. *The Dallas Morning News*' routine coverage of the Dallas Cowboys organization in conjunction with its proximity to Romo's place of residence was an aspect for consideration in preselection. Secondly, the selection of *The Dallas Morning News* was further influenced by the fact that Simpson, too, is a native Texan. As Simpson resides in Los Angeles and such locale is home to Hollywood

Table 1

*Source Selection Pertaining to Sport-Celebrity*

Source	Publication type	Description
<i>US Weekly</i>	Magazine	Latest breaking celebrity news
<i>STAR</i>	Magazine	Celebrity gossip exclusives
<i>IN TOUCH</i>	Magazine	Celebrity news & entertainment
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Magazine	Celebrity, fashion & beauty
<i>People</i>	Magazine	Celebrity & human interest stories
<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	Magazine	Sports news, scores, analysis
<i>USA Today</i>	Newspaper	International, national breaking news
<i>Washington Post</i>	Newspaper	Largest circulation Washington, D.C.
<i>New York Daily News</i>	Newspaper	Daily national circulation
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	Newspaper	Dallas Fort-Worth area news
<i>LA Times</i>	Newspaper	Local, state, national, world news

and numerous celebrities, selection of *The Los Angeles Times* with its propensity for celebrity coverage was deemed significant for utilization. Whether or not *The Dallas Morning News* or *The Los Angeles Times*' geographical closeness to the couple led to a portrayal more advantageous or disadvantageous for both Simpson and Romo was a factor under consideration in their selection as sources.

While the content of each specific newspaper publication was also taken into consideration, more emphasis was placed on the notion that newspapers are viewed as sources of higher factual authenticity and greater newsworthiness than magazine publications (Holmes, 2007). Yet, it would be naïve to overlook the fact that "the first objective of the mass media is to profit" (Sage, 1990, p. 122). Such an acknowledgement led to questioning whether the newspaper medium is generally seen as an objective source in contrast to the high gloss advertisement laden pages of magazines, and as such rationalized the use of both medium interchangeably.

Turner, Bonner and Marshall's (2000) contended that minimal scrutiny exists within the functioning of the celebrity magazine. The construction, or representation of the celebrity and the rationale for implementation, rested upon careful selection among those magazines perceived as salacious or gossip laden. Often discredited for their trivial means and cultural insignificance (Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000), the selected magazines took into consideration Bueno et al.'s. (2007) notion of the differentiation between upmarket magazines and populist press. As Bueno et al. (2007) asserted,

The gossip magazine market has been divided into the following segments: upmarket gossip magazines, which show more respect towards the famous people and take greater care of the contents and the design, and the populist press, which is more sensational, violates people's privacy, relies on rumours and does not differentiate the information, being interested only in gaining readers. (p. 632)

*Sports Illustrated*, which is typically regarded as dissimilar to the selected celebrity magazines for the tone of its overall content, I argue, is, in reality, similar in nature to the salacious celebrity publication. Comparable to the platform of the celebrity gossip magazines, the glorification of the sports hero is similar, if not identical, to the reverence garnered by the celebrity as a sports star is an entertainment celebrity. While the presentation of content may be argued as being substantially different, inevitably, celebrity gossip magazines are intended as the dissection of the entertainment industry and therefore sport, being a form of entertainment, is subject to a conjoining of the two seemingly dissimilar fields. Such recognition provided an interconnectivity alluding to the notion that "sport is an important conduit for the transmission of images, symbols, and meanings that are central to our society" (Jackson, Scherer & Martyn, 2007, p. 178), a argument commonly articulated regarding gossip magazines (Bueno et al., 2007).

Therefore, the inclusion of *Sports Illustrated*, whose aptness to compose articles pertaining to Romo became pivotal in the selection and proved to be contextually relevant. The selection of the various magazines aided in drawing contrasts and comparisons in cases so as to extend beyond the analysis of salacious gossip in celebrity-focused magazines. Ultimately, the aim was to compare and contrast the mass media's various representations of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo in search of consistent themes, within the specified publications.

The particular selection of publication dates within the specified newspapers and magazines took into consideration not only the first publicized notion of the Simpson "jinx," beginning December 17, 2007, but extended through April 15, 2009, a date which coincided with the culmination of 2008 NFL season coverage and the commencement of this writing. The period encompassed approximately 1 year and 4 months and allowed for the consideration of Romo's overall quarterback statistics after the 2007 and 2008 seasons. Romo saw his quarterback rating drop six points from the 2007 to 2008 season. The most significant statistical difference affecting this was that his total completions for touchdowns dropped by nearly 28% in comparison to his 2007 stats. The cause behind this variance, however, could be directly correlated with his decrease in total attempts, as Romo maintained a comparatively consistent completion percentage to that of the previous season (NFL, 2009, para. 6). Such recognition served not only as an indicator of Romo's representation within the specified time, but functioned as an aid in the navigation of the various circumstances, begging the question, was it Romo's

performance, the Simpson “jinx,” or a culmination of the two that formed a basis for their collective and individual representations?

### Theoretical Framework

The researcher adhered to the methodological suggestions outlined in McDonald and Birrell’s (1999) critique, which advocated a critical analysis of the sporting press. MacDonald and Birrell (1999) emphasized undertaking the examination of a specific celebrity or occurrence by recognizing the fluidity of the power structures “as they are constituted along the axes” (p. 284) and specifically in this particular study speaking to gender. This assertion allowed for Simpson and Romo and the December 16, 2007, incident that labeled Simpson the “jinx” to “offer a unique site for understanding specific articulations of power” (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 284).

Examination of the selected magazines and newspapers in this particular study, illustrated McDonald and Birrell’s (1999) contention that “cultural texts are ideologically coded and affected by larger political struggles” (p. 291). This notion regarding textual content illustrated the existence of deeper underlying significance or what furthermore is deemed, “self-evident meaning” (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 291). In recognition of the latent content contained in texts (Barthes, 1977; Benjamin, 1968; Burgin, 1984; Cathcart & Gumpert, 1986; Duncan, 1990; Furguson, 1978), McDonald and Birrell (1999) exemplified Hodder’s notion that stated that texts are “in a continual state of tension, each defining and redefining the other, saying and doing things differently through time” (Hodder, 1998 as quoted in McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 294). Birrell (1999) illustrated Hall’s statement that “ideologies, identities and meanings are never

fixed in time and place, but are forged (articulated) and remade (rearticulated) to take on fresh meaning in particular moments and locations” (p. 294).

In acknowledgment of the multiple meanings and realities present within a piece of writing, (Barthes, 1977; Benjamin, 1968; Burgin, 1984; Cathcart & Gumpert, 1986; Furguson, 1978), it is important to regard the reader’s prior experiences and constructs as seminal influences in the interpretation of content. As Duncan (1990) articulated, “Responsible textual studies do not assert with absolute certainty how particular texts are interpreted. But they suggest the kinds of interpretations that may take place based on available evidence, and likely interpretations of a particular text” (p. 27). The inquiry into the sport-celebrity paring of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo was not void of such inferences and interpretations, as there was the likelihood for opposing and contradictory interpretations of content. Therefore, the fluidity evident in textual content suggests that “as cultural critics it is not to search for the facts of their lives but to search for the ways in which those “facts” are constructed, framed, foregrounded, obscured, and forgotten” (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 292).

### Textual Analysis Procedures

Prior to the discussion of methodological procedures it should be stated that this study is not exempt from its own predispositions (see Appendix C). The adherence to a feminist theoretical framework is undoubtedly demonstrative of my own personal interests and furthermore my own preconceptions regarding the representation of women in the mass media. Therefore, an acknowledgment of the notion that “your research is, or should be, intimately linked with your awareness of yourself and your world” (Bentz &

Shapiro, 1998, p. 5) contributed to recognition of the intrinsic connectivity between the analysis itself and my own personal social consciousness. Though cognizant of personal biases, as a “member of the culture, as a speaker-hearer and writer-reader of the language” I comprehend the concerns that arise among textual analyses (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 95). While potential for bias is unavoidably present in any human undertaking, it was the aim of the textual content analyzed to be “given an interpretative gloss” (Parker, 1989, p. 57) yet at the same time reject “the possibility of producing one true interpretation of the discourse” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 28).

To commence the textual analysis, a “power search” of Lexus-Nexis was employed to obtain newspaper articles pertaining to the coverage of sport-celebrity figures, Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo. The specified search terms of *Jessica Simpson* and *Tony Romo* were employed simultaneously and individually within the precise publication date range of December 17, 2007 (i.e., the first reported notion of the Jessica Simpson “jinx,” through April 15, 2009). Despite the fact that Lexus-Nexis successfully yielded results for *The Dallas Morning News*, *The New York Daily News*, *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*, acquiring news articles from *The Los Angeles Times* was slightly difficult. The Lexus-Nexis search engine only contained articles within the past 6 months for *The Los Angeles Times*; the remaining articles were found through the ProQuest search engine. Operation of ProQuest did not differ from Lexus-Nexis as employment of search terms and specified dates remained homogeneous (see Table 2).

While the utilization of Lexus-Nexis and ProQuest search engines generated results for the selected newspaper publications, the selected magazines (i.e., *US Weekly*,

Table 2

*Search Engine and Retrieval Method*

Search engine	Description	Sources retrieved	Method of source retrieval
Lexus-Nexis	Full-text sources from business, news (national, regional and international outlets) and legal periodicals. Contains over 6,000 sources, 350 newspapers, 300 journals and magazines. (Lexus Nexis, 2009, para. 5)	<i>The Dallas Morning New; The New York Daily News, The Washington Post; USA Today; The Los Angeles Times</i>	Power search
Academic search premier	Full-text for over 4,600 journals and more than 8,450 indexing and abstracts. 3,900 peer-reviewed journal articles. Contains, reports, trade publications and magazines (Ebsco, 2009).	<i>People Magazine &amp; Sports Illustrated</i>	Advanced search Boolean/ phrase
ProQuest	Contains newspapers, magazines and journals retrievable through basic search, publication search, basic search, advanced search and topic guide search with employing ProQuest smart search (ProQuest, 2009, n. p).	<i>The Los Angeles Times</i>	Advanced search
Library catalog	Allows for basic search, advanced keyword search, number search, combined author title search and course reserves of all material contained in library and/or its branch locations.	<i>Sports Illustrated; People; US Weekly</i>	Advanced keyword search

*Star, IN TOUCH, Life & Style, People and Sports Illustrated*) were found in hard copy form through the local library's catalog system. In addition to *People Magazine* and



*Sports Illustrated* hard copy forms, individual articles were made searchable through the implementation of Academic Search Premier, an electronic library catalog search engine, where search terms and dates consistent with those employed in newspaper search engines were utilized. Due to the difficulty of consistently retrieving *Star*, *In Touch* and *Life & Style Magazine*, a subscription to the above magazines was bought in March 2008 and back issue copies for the rest were ordered beginning 1 week prior to December 17, 2007 (i. e., commencement of this analysis). Upon conclusion of both newspaper and magazine searches, 100 articles from each that met the selected identifiable criteria as formerly noted were selected for textual analysis.

In order to obtain a working knowledge of the context of Simpson and Romo's sport-celebrity pairing, the 100 magazine and 100 newspaper articles were read to achieve a greater sense of the representations and power dynamics surrounding the couple. Proper examination of the text, as Wood and Kroger (2000) contended, "requires a particular orientation to texts, a particular frame of mind" (p. 91). Textual content pertaining to both Simpson and Romo were again explored "creatively in all of its multifarious aspects and an open-mindedness to entertain multiple possibilities" (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 91).

Textual content contained in the 100 magazine and 100 newspaper articles were examined for meaning as they emerged in the analysis. The analysis considered the following question: "How does meaning become produced and exchanged; how does a text share meaning?" (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000, p. 307).

Articulation of this notion by Acosta-Alzuru and Lester-Roushanzamir (2000) allowed

for the textual analysis to consider the framing of the textual content. Understanding the salient aspects or “aspects of a perceived reality” (Entman, 1993, p. 52), allowed for portions of the frames to become “noticeable” and “meaningful” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). The framing then allowed for the text to highlight “the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

After textual analysis, latent content became apparent and themes emerged. It should be noted that selected magazines and newspapers were read and reread to garner greater understanding of the material. Patterns and interpretations were then noted and the interpretations of the emergent typologies were applied in discussion, while underscoring the theoretical framework. While the analysis attempted to consider the salient material, the textual analysis first and foremost “emphasize[d] relations of power while also attending to relations of meaning” that manifested within the text (Acosta-Alzuru & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2000, p. 307). Therefore, the analysis attempted “to discover and make visible the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in an artifact and the ideologies that are being muted in it” (Foss, 1996, p. 296).

Employment of a textual analysis in conjunction with McDonald and Birrell’s (1999) declaration for the need to read sport critically, assisted in the formulation in which the research was conducted. These two significant factors assisted in the study’s aim to examine the media’s representations of the sport-celebrity coupling of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo.

## Chapter 4

### Results and Discussion

The attention placed upon both Simpson and Romo emphasized the media's selective determination of newsworthy events. Because Simpson and Romo's position upon the hierarchical celebrity structure denoted them both as "achieved" celebrities, (Rojek, 2001, 17) their private lives ascended onto the public sphere, becoming "part of the insistent cultural data" (Rojek, 2001, p. 20). Consequently, the media's preoccupation with Simpson and Romo, both individually and collectively, became a means of conveying the "surrender a portion of the veridical self" (Rojek, 2001, p. 20) and of departure from "the world of anonymity and privacy" (Rojek, 2001, p. 20). There was less focus placed on both Simpson and Romo via the mass media prior to their romantic coupling. The depictions by the media became a significant factor in the types of portrayals acquired and labels given after Simpson and Romo became a couple. The representation of Simpson and Romo illustrated the mass media's ability to both exalt and condemn (Rojek, 2001).

As Rosnow (1980) articulated, "The efficiency of the news media . . . also contributes greatly to the perpetuation of hearsay by producing an expansive rumor mill" (p. 579), thereby subjugating those in the limelight to a heightened vulnerability to the detrimental effect of rumors. Rosnow and Fine (1976), further noted, "Some rumors never die but become part of the established popular belief structure . . . [and that] some rumors become so deeply enmeshed in the web of recorded history that they cannot easily

be excised” (pp. 42–43), these rumors become “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53) than any professional achievements.

For Simpson, the origin of such depictions can be traced to the salacious gossip that anointed Jessica Simpson, the “jinx” in 2007 for allegedly contributing to the less-than-optimal performance of Dallas Cowboys quarterback, Tony Romo. As the *New York Daily News* stated, “Simpson, 27, was blamed by many Cowboys fans for Romo’s worst game of the year: He suffered through a 10–6 upset loss to Philadelphia when the curvy singer-actress watched from a luxury box in Dallas Dec. 16” (McShane, 2008, p. 8).

The fascination surrounding this particular incident and the increasing interest afterward mirrored that of a vortex or what Whannel (2001) termed as vortextuality (p. 143). The gossip that swirled around Simpson’s “jinxing effect” on Romo’s performance dictated headlines, becoming a primary topic for discussion. Recognizing the vortextuality (Whannel, 2001) surrounding the relationship of Simpson and Romo, *Sports Illustrated* noted,

Face it, whoever Jess is dating is going to be fodder for the checkout-line rags, no matter if he’s a stock boy, a singer or the quarterback of America’s Team. Romo isn’t the reason the two of them are splashed on the pages of *Us Weekly*- but he is the reason they’re topic A on *Around the Horn*. (Hoffer, Kennedy, Bechtel & Cannella, 2008, pp. 16–17)

Consequently, due to the whirlwind of coverage of the relationship, the mass media increasingly reported on Simpson and Romo, combining their coverage with satirical narratives on the situation. Illustrating this trend, *Star Magazine* noted that Justin Timberlake, host of the July 16, 2008 ESPY awards, parodied the relationship of Simpson and Romo:

The “SexyBack” singer had the audience in stitches. Using cutouts for props, JT did his best comic impersonations of Jessica Simpson and her Dallas Cowboys quarterback beau, Tony Romo. He came up with clever nicknames for the couple: RoJo or Tessica, anyone. (“Star Shots,” 2008, p. 8)

CBS’ *Tonight Show* host, David Letterman, added a political spin to the increasingly cliché jinx notion as he satirically commented, “John McCain lost in Michigan, and supporters are blaming it on his trip to Mexico with Jessica Simpson” (“Quotable,” 2008, p. 3c). *The New York Post* continued this criticism and hired a Simpson look-a-like to attend the New York Giants versus Dallas Cowboys game in hopes the “faux” Simpson would have a similar “jinxing” effect on Romo. In recognition of this hi-jinx, the *Washington Post* stated,

Bad-luck charm Jessica Simpson skipped the Cowboys-Giants playoff game Sunday, but the *New York Post*—in an inspired bit of tabloid tomfoolery—bought a ticket for a look-alike to rattle her boyfriend, Cowboys QB Tony Romo. Blond beauty Lynsey Nordstrom, wearing Romo’s No. 9 jersey, created quite a stir in the third row near the 50-yard-line; the newspaper is taking credit for the Giants’ 21–17 upset victory. (Argetsinger & Roberts, 2008, p. C03)

Moreover, it was the acknowledgment of the effects of vortextuality that deemed this topic worthy of exploration; in turn, this inquiry uncovered the presence of archaic social stereotyping (Whannel, 2001, 2002). The principle typologies of relationship characterization emerged in manners both complimentary and contradictory to the notion of the prescribed gender roles and hegemonic masculinity. The following typologies are outlined below (see Table 3): the archetypal beauty, the feminine position (i.e., the supporter), the dominant woman (i.e., femme fatale, Yoko Ono), and the hegemonic male.

Table 3

*Typologies*

Typologies	Usage/meaning in study	Notes
Archetypal beauty	The ideal imbued by society and the mass media in connection to the female body/physical exterior. Parallels (i.e., corresponding and/or contradictory) the beauty ideals denoted in preceding analyses of the archetypal sporting partnership and sport-celebrity relationship.	Polarization Hyper-feminized/ sexualized Masculine/ emasculate male
Traditional gender roles	Including, but not limited to, division of labor, perceived masculine and feminine roles, prescribed gender roles, and socialization as denoted in pervious inquiries encompassing the archetypal sporting partnership.	The feminine position (i.e., acquiescent character) The supporter Archetypal sporting partnership
The dominant woman	Denotes a woman who lives above and strays from conventional gender parameters. Connotes the unfavorable labels from the nonadherence to gender norms imbued by the mass media and society. Categorization encompassing the femme fatale and/ or a "Yoko Ono."	Femme fatale Yoko Ono (i.e., synonymous with "bad luck") Antagonist vs. protagonist The "jinx" Disadvantageous labels
The hegemonic male	Denotes fluctuation and fluidity of the hegemony but contends the hegemonic male maintains heightened societal status by adhering to prescribed gender norms.	Fluidity/ fluctuation Archetypal male Sporting spouse Male sporting star The "new lad" American football Advantageous labels

## Archetypal Beauty

Descriptions of Jessica Simpson prove the notion that her femininity and sexuality are central to her persona. Moreover, such external, physical traits inexorably construct her as an apt partner for a sporting star. Because Simpson exhibited the idiosyncratic traits of an archetypal sporting spouse, she was not exempt from such stereotypes. Often, she was said to be “slim and sexy” (“Body Update,” 2009, p. 56), “young, blonde, and gorgeous” (Dahlberg, 2007), with “double-D breast[s]” (“Bullied For Her,” 2009, p. 58); moreover, she was represented as a “Barbie” (“Ukraine: We Want Jessica,” 2008, p. 62).

Drawing a parallel to Barbie, “the cultural icon of female beauty” (Dittmar et al., 2006, p. 283) sustains the notion that Simpson’s beauty is exemplary and ideal. It is her “buxom blond” (Bertram, 2009, p. 16), all-American attractiveness, and slender physique that are unquestionably rudimentary to her success not only as a female in society but also in luring a similarly compatible partner. Thus, Simpson’s beauty, in alignment with that of the sporting spouse, casts her as a trophy whose “sole purpose is to be sexually desirable and/or the object of male attention” (Gordon, 2008, p. 246). This furthermore presented Simpson in a manner similar to the sportswoman, where the emphasis is focused on her physicality, representing her as a passive, sexualized being (Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1998; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Kane & Buysse, 2005; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; McKay, 1997; Sabo & Messner, 2001; Thereberge, 1987). As Sabo and Messner (2001) noted, “Feminists have long argued that the sexualization of female athletes in sport media . . . robs women of athletic legitimacy and preserves hegemonic masculinity” (p. 28). Although not a sportswoman, Simpson, was similarly reduced by

the mass media to a sexualized woman, similar to the photographic illustration of other women involved with sportsmen, which anointed them as peripheral, cheerleader-like characters inviting an exploitation of the female body (Duncan, 1990; Messner et al., 2004). Messner et al. 's (2004) assertion of a woman's contributory role in televised sport as a sexual object transcends the medium of television alone, finding its way onto the glossy pages of magazines as well as newspapers, as was evident in Simpson's representation. Messner et al. 's (2004) observations of the "bikini-clad blonde" hostess and wrestling programming's "sexually provocative dancers" (for example, the "Gorgeous Nitro Girls" on TNT)" (p. 233), reiterated the media's hyper-feminized, soft-core pornographic sexualized view of women (Duncan, 1990; Kuhn, 1985). This sustained the notion that the media's focus on Simpson's exterior appearance degraded her to a mere sexual object (Sabo & Messner, 2001). This further paralleled Simpson to that of a female video game character whose beauty is overtly sexualized, highlighting womanly attributes through revealing, feminine attire (Miller & Summers, 2007) ultimately casting her as an objectified, paraded being. This is illustrated in the article titled "Jessica Simpson Models 'Pretty Woman' Style in Lake Tahoe," which stated that

Simpson, 28, first modeled a conservative belted white A-line shift while watching beau Tony Romo play in the American Century Championship charity golf match. Simpson, who completed the classic ensemble with Jackie O sunglasses, was accompanied by her sister, Ashlee Simpson-Wentz, and brother-in-law, Pete Wentz. But the "Come on Over" singer quickly went from classy to flashy when she traded her demure frock for a thigh-skimming, bust-baring dress that evening. Simpson left little to the imagination in the red hot number as she made her way to a Heart concert with her Dallas Cowboys quarterback beau. (Miller, 2008, n. p.).



With terms such as, “thigh-skimming,” “bust-baring” and “red hot,” Simpson is captured as a “sexy prop” (Messner et al., 2004, p. 234), and dresses in a “belted white A-line shift,” “Jackie O sunglasses” and “demure frock,” she also epitomized the archetype of femininity. As sporting photographs of female athletes emphasize “hips, thighs, buttocks, breasts, crotches” (Duncan, 1990, p. 30), Simpson’s depiction as the “good girl” is juxtaposed with the “naughty girl” where she is infantilized and then sexualized in a way that re-establishes the notion of women as commodities for male gratification (Messner et al, 2004). According to Brandt and Carstens (2005), “The term ‘gaze,’ in French, *le regard*, means to look or stare, often with eagerness or desire” (p. 235). Consequently, it was this gaze which reduced Simpson to “body parts” and kept her from being viewed as a human being with “thoughts, feelings and desires” (Gordon, 2008, p. 246), a notion of women readily depicted in the mass media. Hence, Simpson’s semblance to Clayton and Harris’s (2004) analysis of the former *Sun* newspaper’s Page Three sweetheart Katie Price (aka. Jordan) and girlfriend of footballer Dwight Yorke who was classified as “sexy,” “model” and “babe” (Clayton & Harris, 2004, p. 326) allowed Simpson to garner praise for her exquisite beauty.

As “the growth of celebrity culture is closely bound up with the aestheticization of everyday life” (Rojek, 2001, p. 102), the term “aestheticization” coined by German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten denotes the “perception of beauty” (Rojek, 2001, p. 102). As the mass media continually widens its “sphere of influence” (Rojek, 2001, p. 102), the transmission of the ideals of beauty through the mass media becomes the embodiment of 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s contention “that the

theory of beauty is on a par with the theory of truth and goodness” (Rojek, 2001, p. 102) and proved to be relevant in a contemporary context where the selected media (i.e., magazines and newspapers) showed Simpson’s ability to gained public esteem for her display of beauty. As a result, Romo received adulation for the acquisition of such an attractive woman. Predictably, the media’s lauding of Romo re-established his position favorably upon the hegemonic hierarchy.

This in turn typified Morris’ (1981) contention that the football star pines for a woman of appropriate femininity and worthy beauty stating, “typically, she is gentle but lively, pretty and often beautiful, feminine, domesticated and genuinely admires her man as much as she loves him” (Clayton & Harris, 2004, p. 128). While Malamud’s (1952) novel, *The Natural*, depicted Iris Lemon as an “attractive woman, around thirty, maybe more, and built solid but not too big” (p. 117), it was Roy Hobbs egotism that perceived Iris Lemon “beneath his dignity to settle for and to settle down with,” as she was not the blond bombshell, Marilyn Monroe (Cochran, 1991, p. 83). Hence, the male professional athlete seeks out ideal beauty, and the attainment of such woman anoints him with advantageous portrayals by fans and mass media alike (Clayton & Harris, 2004). As David Beckham, José Consecó, Joe DiMaggio, and Dwight Yorke all procured an archetypal beauty, the exhibition of their women became not unlike that of a trophy on display. It was Jessica Consecó’s (2005) buxom physical appearance that was symbolic of such a prize and that gave José an escalated masculine status in the baseball realm (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001). True to this example, their woman’s rendering within

both the public and private domain became rudimentary in the sporting star's portrayal (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002).

It was undoubtedly Simpson's womanly appearance that was pivotal in the portrayal of Romo as a masculine or emasculated man. Victoria Beckham was framed pessimistically for transgressing the patriarchal order and endangering her husband, David Beckham's, masculinity (Whannel, 2001). Simpson likewise was a media target in reaction to her (apparent) weight gain. Undoubtedly the relentlessness of the mass media's focus on Simpson's appearance became a reiteration that "a woman's worth lies in her physical appearance and sexual appeal" (Gordon, 2008, p. 246). The intensive focus upon Simpson's larger figure even landed on the President's radar as during a postinaugural interview, as *The Washington Post* noted, "On Super Bowl Sunday, Obama talked to NBC's Matt Lauer, pretending to be hurt that *Us Weekly* had put Jessica Simpson on the cover instead of him" (Kurtz, 2009, p. C01). Labeled as "curvy" ("Simpson's in the Spotlight," 2009, p. 41), "shapely" ("Body Battle," 2008, p. 24), "more to love" ("More To Love," July 28, 2008, p. 55) and "downright chunky" ("More To Love," 2008, p. 55), Jessica, as *People Magazine* declared, was "branded with the scarlet 'F'" for fat (Tan et al., 2009, p. 5).

While magazines and newspapers equally scrutinized her gradual and public physical transformation, Simpson amassed copious amounts of attention as unflattering photographs emerged illustrating her "significant" weight gain. As *The New York Daily News* bluntly stated, "Paging Joe Simpson: Lock up the doughnuts" (Piazza, 2008, p. 18). *The Washington Post* wrote that "she appeared onstage either significantly heavier

than she has been in recent years or wearing the most unflattering pair of high-waisted pants ever to be stitched from denim” (Givhan, 2009, p. M01). The *Los Angeles Times* similarly stated,

That’s right. Simpson was caught wearing “mom jeans.” Ill-fitting, high-waisted denim pants that manage to make your butt look wide and flat, “mom jeans” is also slang used in connection with a woman who’s either given up—or been passed by. (Lynch, 2009, p. 7)

While *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times* downplayed her weight gain by placing a portion of the blame on Simpson’s “mom jeans,” *The New York Daily News* gossip section illustrated an unsympathetic perspective, asserting “Jessica Simpson: God knows she could use the exercise. Just tie a can of chili to a string, and yank it around the stage” (Schreffler, Evans & Lester, 2009, p. 16). *The New York Daily News* furthered their callousness in stating, “Something tells us her contract included an all-access pass to the kitchens” (Schreffler et al., 2009, p. 16).

Since “the media is the main vehicle through which societal beauty ideals are conveyed and promoted” inevitably, the prying eyes of the media positioned Simpson’s abandonment of the “Western standard of attractiveness” (Inch & Merali, 2006, p. 109) at “No. 1 on *USA Today*’s Heat Index, which measures media exposure” (Cadden, 2009, p. 10d). Such scrutiny illustrated quite a departure from the previous likeness to “Barbie” (“Ukraine: We Want Jessica,” 2008, p. 62) where Simpson’s delineation from the archetypal feminine role posed not only a danger to her career but reiterated her lack of ability to beguile the heterosexual male by maintaining his interest through the art of seduction (Connell, 2005). Moreover, the press insinuated that her heavier body made it harder for her to hold Romo’s attention.

Simpson's adherence to the wives of Cowboys (WOCs; Pearlman, 2008) beauty standards was similar to the adherence of wives and girlfriends in various other elite sporting arenas. Simpson became an amalgamation of both favorable and unfavorable labels as her weight fluctuated. Represented with a svelte figure, Simpson's adherence to wives of Cowboys (WOCs) standards became apparent in the selected media, yet as coverage in the selected media emerged of her fuller figure, Simpson's representation became unfavorable. The further Simpson was represented straying from the traditional gender beauty standards, or moreover the standards adhered to by the archetypal sporting wife and girlfriend, the more the media stressed that Simpson needed to transform her body to revive her advantageous representations.

As the media framed her as straying from the norm of feminine beauty, Romo was identified as nonchalant. Furthermore it implied that if he disassociated from Simpson, he would most likely achieve a heightened masculine image. Echoing such a notion, *Star Magazine* stated, "A Dallas-based Romo didn't exactly rush to a touring Simpson's side" ("Bullied For," 2009, p. 57) and further said, "Romo may or may not be fully there for her" ("Bullied For," 2009, p. 59). It was Romo's blasé nature, in conjunction with his lack of reciprocity (Ortiz, 2005), that further aligned him with the masculine being and the archetypal sporting husband.

Epitomizing Clayton and Harris' (2004) concept in which the male gains reverence and recognition from exhibition of laddism (p. 326), the complimentary and contradictory representation of Jessica Simpson as the archetypal sporting spouse, dually categorizes Romo as the masculine and emasculate man. Likewise, this depiction

is predominantly dependent upon Simpson's obedience to orthodox gender roles and more notably those sustained by the mass media.

### Traditional Gender Roles

Simpson came into her own in the late 1990s with the single "I Wanna Love You For Forever"; her celebrity expanded further as she gained fame with her MTV reality show, *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica*. As Simpson was emerging as a worldwide celebrity and a household name, Romo was still playing football for Eastern Illinois University and going undrafted as a free agent to the Dallas Cowboys football organization in 2003. Romo's personal celebrity ceased to gain traction outside of his locality.

It was Simpson's preceding success, similar to that of Victoria Beckham's initial celebrity status in contrast to David Beckham's status (Clayton & Harris, 2004), that made her presumably immune to becoming perceived as the archetypal sporting spouse where the "[woman's] identity is submerged under that of her [partner]" (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001, p. 347). Yet, that did not happen.

While Romo's identity illustrated flux, allowing for both positive and detrimental portrayals, Simpson's persona while attached to Romo remained the archetypal sporting partner. Simpson lost her autonomy, remaining dependent upon Romo and his vocation for her selfhood. Dissimilar to the archetypal sporting relationship where the male is predominately the breadwinner and the woman anointed the domestic, Simpson was independently wealthy prior to her relationship with Romo (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; Thompson, 1999). Ironically though, the media no longer depicted her as a guardian of her own occupation (singer-

actress-entrepreneur), but with labels such as, “groupie” (“Jessica’s Wedding Pain,” 2008, p. 39), “Tony’s No. 1 Fan” (“Hot Pics,” 2008, p. 30) and “Tony’s part-time lover” (“Couples Drama,” 2008, pp. 34–35). Such phrasing signified Simpson similarity to Yoko Ono who was still pursuing her own career endeavors but was “an integral part of John’s career” (Martin, 1996, p. 166). Thus, Yoko’s entrenchment in Lennon’s career superseded her own personal identity and accomplishments. Like Ono, this denoted Simpson as Romo’s extra appendage, an extension of Romo and his occupation in the sporting realm. Simpson’s identity or lack thereof, then illustrated the notion emphasized by researchers that the female sporting partner functions as an acquiescent, supplemental character, and that notion reiterated the patriarchal gender order (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999).

Jessica adhered to the feminine function of supporter in order to avoid scrutiny in the masculine world in which she dwells (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As media outlets positioned Simpson as an auxiliary character fulfilling her proper womanly duties as defined by society, as *The Los Angeles Times* noted, “*Simpson*, there to root on boyfriend *Tony Romo*” (Stewart, 2008, D3). She was often seen as “desperate” (“Jessica’s Wedding Pain,” 2008, p. 39) “too open” (“Jessica’s Wedding Pain,” 2008, p. 39), full of “insecurities” (“Jessica Checks Up,” 2008, p. 57). Real or imagined, this characterization became evident in her representation.

This posed a catch-22 for Jessica as both a divergence from and an adherence to traditionally defined gender roles was cause for conflicting media reports. Further, such

scrutiny invited the reader to find both humor and scorn in the framing of her actions. *People Magazine* asserted, “With a new football season starting, she’s braced herself for criticism from Cowboys fans, who last year called her a jinx. Undaunted, she has scheduled her concerts and promotional work around Romo’s games” (Bartolomeo, 2008, p. 110). *The New York Daily News* reported, “The 28-year-old later dedicated the song “You’re My Sunday” to Romo, noting, “My boyfriend is a football player, and he takes up my Sundays and now my Mondays. I am sooo happy!” (Miller, 2009, para. 8). Each statement, though displaying the essence of feminine support mirroring that of the archetypal sporting spouse, was laden with implications that such acts on her part were artificial, even forced (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). In turn, this implied artificiality brought Simpson mockery and jeers even in her obedience to common, prescribed gendered norms.

The media’s representation of Simpson certainly paralleled the archetypal sporting spouse as she is represented as an “incorporation” (Thompson, 1999) of Romo’s life and his profession. Simpson, ultimately tending to his every request and desire, functioned as what Ortiz (2005) denoted as a “marriage worker” (p. 273). The position of the “marriage worker” (Ortiz, 2005, p. 273) depicted Simpson as supplementary to Romo as her very functioning became a mirror of the traditionally prescribed gender roles. As the media covered the notion of Simpson and Romo cohabitating in Texas, the insinuation that Romo would provide the financial means to obtain the residence translated to Simpson’s representation further becoming akin to that of the standard



housewife. Illustrating the palpability of gender roles, *Life & Style Weekly* stated, “According to numerous reports, the Dallas Cowboys quarterback, 28, has plunked down nearly \$700,000 for a six-bedroom, four-bath mansion in Irving, Texas...And Tony’s interior decorator? Jessica” (“Tony And Jessica Search,” 2008, p. 42).

*In Touch Weekly* further expanded,

Though the couple has been dating for more than a year, they’ve become more serious than ever in recent months, with Jessica moving into Tony’s Irving, Texas, home and redecorating several rooms, including the master bedroom, den and dining room. (“Here Come The Brides,” 2009, p. 40)

While these assertions sustain the notion that both males and females find fulfillment in the adherence to socially prescribed functions (Treas, 2008), the representation of Simpson as the feminine woman and Romo as the masculine male is furthermore apparent in her contribution to the *2008 Dallas Cowboys Family Cookbook*. Covering Simpson’s culinary addition to the annual cookbook, *The New York Daily News* noted,

Recipes from the pop singer-turned-actress-turned-country music singer are featured in the 2008 Cowboys Family Cookbook, presented by the wives of the Dallas Cowboys. Uh . . . hold up: Last we checked, Simpson isn’t even engaged to her Cowboys quarterback beau, Tony Romo, let alone married to him. (Miller, 2009, p. 1)

*The Washington Post* sports section furthered,

Yes, Jessica Simpson shares the banner of page 126 with Romo. For some reason, though, they couldn’t find any photos of Jessica. There’s also a sign that her career as an actress and singer isn’t going so well. Her occupation is listed as ‘hairstylist.’ (“Quirk Takes,” 2008, p. E02)

Conclusively, the obvious nature of Simpson’s representation denoted her as an extension, a supporter of his vocation, whose adherence to the feminine position became readily imbued by the mass media. In her contribution to the cookbook, the

sardonic labeling of herself as a hairdresser and the media's representation of Romo as the breadwinner left Simpson portrayed like many archetypal sporting wives and girlfriends as a compliant being (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). Furthermore, it was the media's imbuelement of Simpson's declining career that continued to typify the notion of Romo as the wage earner, the man. Such an insinuation of the bleakness of Simpson's current and future career endeavors implied that it would be favorable for Simpson to embrace Romo's career undertakings and inevitably adopt the his role of the supporter. Noting Simpson's flat-lining career, *The Washington Post* noted, "Because Jessica Simpson's music career hasn't been going so well lately, her conversion from pop starlet to country ingénue feels less like a daring expression of purpose and more like a Hail Mary pass" ("Quick Spins," 2008, p. C08). Furthering Simpson's lack of current career achievements and moreover deficient theatrical abilities, *The Washington Post* comically stated, "Blonde Ambition (PG-13) was Jessica Simpson's grand attempt to prove she could act. The fact that you don't recall seeing it advertised at a theater gives you a clue how well it turned out" ("Coming Attractions," 2008, p. WE23). *The New York Daily News* in a concurrent condemnation of Simpson's *Blonde Ambition* asserted,

Remember all the press when Jessica Simpson was shooting her latest comedy, "Blonde Ambition" (PG-13, \$24. 96)? Well, after making a grand total of \$6,422 in theaters, it headed straight for DVD, where you can now take unkind delight in watching what should be one of her final cinematic efforts. (Weitzman, 2008, p. 39)

Phrasings such as “Hail Mary Pass” (“Quick Spins,” 2008, p. C08), “grand attempt” (“Coming Attractions,” 2008, p. WE23) and “final cinematic efforts” (Weitzman, 2008, p. 39) illustrated Altheide and Snow’s (1979) notion that “social reality is constituted, recognized and celebrated with media, thus supporting the idea that media presents to us what is ‘normal’”(p. 12). For the media to report on Simpson’s career advantageously would abandon persistent social norms (e.g., man as breadwinner); hence, the media’s reinforcement of an ideal that expects men and women to “play different roles, hold different attitudes, espouse different values and express different feelings” (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 100). The media’s aptness to embrace the notion that “women are to assume roles in the private sphere...and men are expected to assume roles in the public sphere” consequently positioned Romo as the “worker, citizen, and active creator of social and cultural life” (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 100). Romo became the embodiment of his career as the professional athletes are denoted as, “wage laborers who have acquired salable skills” and who “sell their labor as an occupation and livelihood” (Sage, 1990, p. 157). Therefore, Simpson became akin to the sporting wife, exuding characteristics of femininity, such as “nurturance,” “dependence” and “passivity” (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 100) and became simple in her general representation. Unlike the sporting spouse, Simpson is not burdened with the stress of moving abruptly to a new locale while simultaneously having to care for the children and doing housework, transferring bank accounts, budgeting finances, and handling any other household chores (Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001). She is burdened, however, with the duty of halting her life, attending Romo’s games, and giving up her identity to promote

his career, something that Victoria Beckham did as she put aside her own personal and professional aspirations for the needs of her husband and their newborn son, Brooklyn (Beckham & Watt, 2003).

While previous research suggests that the sporting spouse who adheres to the traditional gender order is lauded, the portrayal of Simpson suggested otherwise. Simpson's adherence was framed as a farce, and the humor surrounding the situation (Goffman, 1959, 1967) "plays a distinct role in this socialization process and the reproduction of inequality" (Bridges, 2009, p. 96). One could contend that such a portrayal, similar to Clayton and Harris's (2004) inquiry of Victoria Beckham as a supporter, is dependent upon the woman's previous actions and whether the transformation from an autonomous self to a dependent self is seen as being out of character. Simpson's diverse portrayal in the media throughout the years is undoubtedly a factor in rendering her a supporter and devotee. Moreover, this rendering exemplified how she is both similar and dissimilar in her representation of the archetypical sporting partner. The representation of women, and in this particular instance Simpson, exemplified the exaltation of masculinity within society and the media "which simultaneously devalues the role of women and the values of femininity" (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 100).

### The Dominant Woman

It is clear that the labels "femme fatale" and "Yoko Ono" are unique in their own right. While research notes dissimilarities in each characterization, the contemporary representations of Jessica Simpson illustrated the erroneous interchangeability of the

terms' usage by the media. As both labels (as utilized by the media) portray women as "man-eaters," causing the fall of man, Simpson was continually framed as embodying this concept. In the wake of Romo's far from flawless performance in 2007 and continued poor performance thereafter, the media was swift to anoint Simpson a "bad-luck charm" (Stewart, 2007, p. D2) "football's Yoko Ono" (Olson, 2008, p. 62), and gave her the combined title "Yoko Romo" ("How Jessica's Trying," 2008, p. 43). *Sports Illustrated* further asserted, "Simpson was Yoko to Romo's John, Eve to his Adam, Carla Bruni to his Nicolas Sarkozy" (Hoffer, Kennedy, Bechtel & Cannella, 2008, pp. 16–17).

Parallels to Yoko Ono, whose influence was routinely blamed for the demise and break-up of the Beatles, positioned Simpson for similar scrutiny and hostility (Friedlander, 1996; Miles, 2004). Her presence at the sporting games equated to her to being a "jinx" ("Tony To Jessica," 2008, p. 21). Inevitably, she represented a thorn in the side of Romo, an unlucky token that Romo himself and Cowboys' fans could not remove. She was what the media classified as a "vixen sorceress" (Olson, 2008, p. 62) who had Tony under her spell. In recognition of Simpson as the "vixen sorceress," Terrell Owens stated in *The Dallas Morning News*, "I think a lot of people feel like she's kind of taken his focus away" (Watkins, 2007, p. 1). Similarly, *Dallas Morning News* columnist Tim Cowlshaw noted, "Judging from my e-mail inbox, most of you are ready to lay blame for Sunday's defeat right where it clearly belongs. That's right. This one's on Jessica Simpson" (Cowlshaw, 2007, p. 1).

As the media consistently reiterated the notion of Simpson as a man-eater whose malevolence perpetuated a hex on Romo's sporting prowess, the notion of Simpson as the

root cause of his poor performance seemed believable. A good example of this can be found in an article in *The Los Angeles Times* that stated

On Sunday, current flame Jessica Simpson was in a luxury suite wearing a pink Cowboys jersey with Romo's No. 9 on it, and the Cowboys lost, 10–6. Under the “Jessica Jinx,” Romo completed 13 of 36 passes for 214 yards with no touchdowns and three interceptions for a 22. 2 rating—the lowest single-game rating of his career. (Yoon, 2007, p. D4)

Also criticizing Simpson for Romo's performance, *USA Today* declared,

When Simpson showed up at a Dec. 16 Dallas Cowboys game against the Philadelphia Eagles, Cowboys quarterback Romo played one of his worst games ever, losing 10–6. In the days before his team lost a Jan. 13 playoff game against the New York Giants, Simpson and Romo were seen vacationing in Los Cabos, Mexico. Speculation ran wild about her negative effect on his game. (Blas, 2008, p. 02d).

Summing up the two previous quotations alluding to the “jinx” or the “Yoko Ono Effect” that Simpson invoked, *The New York Daily News* stated, “If Jessica Simpson is spotted in a Texas Stadium luxury box, wearing a tight No. 9 shirt and shaking her pom-poms, the Dallas Cowboys will be in trouble six ways from Sunday” (Olson, 2008, p. 62 ).

Ultimately, the fault placed upon Simpson was similar to the descriptions conferred upon Cleopatra, Eve, Lady MacBeth, Pandora, Salome (Rossmann, 2003, p. 1009) and her contemporaries, Victoria Beckham (Clayton & Harris, 2004) and Janet Jones (Jackson, 2001). Garnering similar labeling to Janet Jones, or “Mrs. Wayne Gretzky,” who was branded a “Jezebel, Dragon Lady, and another Yoko Ono” (Jackson, 2001, 173), Simpson was similarly subjected to unruly crowds, “chanting in unison, “Send Jessica home,” over and over” (“Jess & Tony Hot,” 2008, p. 47). These negative depictions painted her as the embodiment of misfortune; the placement of blame on Simpson appeared unbalanced.

As the press focused more on Simpson's actions, it began to minimize, disregard, and defend Romo's actions, as *The New York Daily News* stated,

Romo took the most famous weekend vacation in NFL history when he skipped off to Cabo with Jess on the bye weekend before the Cowboys lost to the Giants in the divisional round. Romo might have had a great time, but all the talk about the getaway was a huge distraction leading up to the Giants game. It did prompt a highlight moment from T. O., when he started to cry after the game while saying how unfair it was to criticize Romo for taking the vacation. (Myers, 2008, p. 54)

*New York Daily News* sports writer, Ohm Youngmisuk noted Terrell Owens' commented,

The wide receiver broke down in tears while defending his quarterback after the Giants stunned the Cowboys, 21–17, at Texas Stadium yesterday."This is not about Tony," a choked-up Owens said as tears welled up behind his designer sunglasses."You guys can point the finger at him, you can talk about the vacation and if you do that, it is really unfair. It's really unfair. That is my teammate. That is my quarterback. And if you guys do that, it is unfair. We lost as a team. We lost as a team, man." (Youngmisuk, 2008, p. 52)

*Sports Illustrated* noted,

As you might expect, coverage of Romo's busy love life has divided this great country into at least two groups. His peers applaud his relationship initiative, teammates and opponents alike agog with appreciation. (The New York Giants' Michael Strahan, in last week's build-up to Sunday's divisional playoff, allowed that if Jess expressed an interest in him, he would "give her a shot.") Neither the Cowboys owner nor the coach (who more or less ordered his players off the premises during their bye week) could find any fault with Romo, for that matter. "No qualms," said Jerry Jones, the owner. (Hoffer et al., 2008, pp. 16–17)

In expansion of New York Giants defensive end Michael Strahan's comments *The New York Daily News* stated,

It's your bye week, you can do whatever you want to do," Strahan said."For them to go to Cabo, good for them. They deserved that time off. I see no fault in that. Anybody that thinks because he took a few days with his girlfriend that he's going to come back and not play well or he's not going to be prepared . . . if anything it probably stokes his fire to play even better. (Vacchiano, 2008, p. 79)

Additionally, *The Washington Post* noted, “so far, the Cowboys seem to think that what Romo does in his down time is his business” (Jenkins, 2008, p. E01).

The media as well as his teammates, coaches, and even opponents defended Romo’s actions, romantic rendezvous, and extracurricular activities. Romo’s reception differed from that of David Beckham, whose team manager Glenn Hoddle opposed his off-field actions and, moreover, Victoria herself (Beckham & Watt, 2003). It was Romo’s portrayal regarding this particular aspect that categorized Simpson as conqueror, a skilled manipulator, (Crawford, 2006) and femme fatale who was undermining and annihilating his career. Questioned about her “ulterior motives” (“Jessica & Tony, 2008,” p. 53) in her relationship with the sportsman, *Star* magazine noted,

Sources say there are other reasons for Jessica, 27, to try to keep the flame burning with Tony, 28. She knows that being with him helps her public image—especially with her new country music career, given his following in the South—and she’s milking it for all it’s worth. (Jessica & Tony, 2008, p. 53)

*Sports Illustrated* further echoed,

On Jan. 24, Simpson’s lawyers accused OK! of running a “smear campaign.” (A copy of the letter was obtained and displayed by the gossip website TMZ. com. ) Simpson’s lawyers further contend that Romo and Simpson have not broken up and demand “a prominent and unambiguous retraction.” Why? The article reportedly undermines two of Simpson’s “most valuable professional assets”: her public perception and reputation. (Torre, 2008, p. 20)

Phrases such as “helps her public image” (Jessica & Tony, 2008, p. 53) and “her public perception and reputation” (Torre, 2008, p. 20) imply that, as a femme fatale, Simpson is calculating in her actions (Crawford, 2006). The alleged motives employed by Simpson drew semblance to Spitz’s (2005) assertion that Yoko too was criticized for her motives. Spitz (2005) stated that “Yoko was drawn both to John and to the girth of



his bankbook, which could endow her career,” further noting that “she carried herself, as though nothing could derail her from her mission” (p. 748). While Yoko was frequently called an intellectually gifted woman (Spitz, 2005), parallels between the two suggested that Simpson, as well, is intelligent and astute in her means, signaling a departure from her previous demarcation as the bubblehead dumb blonde. Furthermore, such a representation deemed her a bona fide femme fatale.

While the femme fatale is commonly known to inflict physical harm by being a deadly temptress (Rossmann, 2003), Simpson’s infliction, though not physical, was symbolic of killing Romo’s career and success. Dissimilar to Sherwin’s (2008) examination of the female antagonist, Forrest in the movie *Fatal Attraction*, the media’s representation of Simpson depicted her as both a Yoko Ono and a femme fatale. Such labeling reiterated that divergent action of the female calls for re-establishment and restoration of the patriarchal order (Crawford, 2006). Hence, the negative depiction of Simpson and the positive portrayal of Romo were both framed to perpetuate the masculinity of the culture in which Romo resides.

While Simpson’s representation mirrored that of Clayton and Harris’s (2004) rendering of Victoria Beckham, where she was framed negatively for disrupting the gender order, Romo was positioned in stark contrast to David Beckham who “media (and particularly television) representations often depicted as dull-witted, socially inept, and emasculated by his allegedly dominant (ex-Spice “Girl-powered”) spouse” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 220). Moreover, Romo drew parallels to John Lennon whose relations with Yoko Ono allowed his personal responsibility to be minimized and her impact, in

turn, to be emphasized (Friedlander, 1996). This representation afforded both Romo and Lennon public adulation, empathy, and support in the wake of unflattering media frenzies.

### The Hegemonic Male

The representation of Tony Romo illustrated the “plurality of masculinities” (Wheaton, 2000, p. 438) where it was acknowledged that “there are many masculinities” (Wheaton, 2000, p. 438), a concept that became evident through the fluctuation and fluidity of his representation (Gramsci, 2005; Williams, 1977). While the media representations rarely portrayed Romo negatively, the depiction of Romo’s masculinity seemed to encompass the extremes of “new-laddism” and “the humble man.” Embodying “new-lad” characteristics, which are prominent in English football culture, Romo had the image of an active agent and a maverick sporting star (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002). As Whannel (1999) noted,

In a world that is constrained, maverick sport stars appear to offer the power to live a life of masculine individualism – defying constraints, rebelling against regulation, whilst still performing. The constraints are associated with both authority, the domestic, and the feminine. (p. 262)

While Romo’s representation was infused with the maverick sporting star, it additionally paralleled the new-laddist, Romo’s image which upholds the “traditional masculine values” (Whannel, 1999, p. 262) and contained characteristics popularized within the young, common laborer class structure (Whannel, 1999, 2001, 2002).

Depictions of Romo’s mischievous nature, his indulgence in libations, late night escapades, womanizing and infidelity were translated to that of a “real man” whose exploits were deemed worthy of alpha male exaltation and adulation. Whannel (1983)

defined the *real man* as the personification of the brute macho man. Documenting the Dallas Cowboys team in the 1990s, Pearlman (2008) asserted, “Take forty-six horny, handsome, athletic, twenty-something-year-old men, place them in a city known for sexy women, late-night clubs, and rock-your-world drugs...then shake and serve” (p. 164). As Pearlman (2008) further noted, the Dallas Cowboys players enjoy the “Austin nightlife for beers, shots, long legs, big breasts, and lap dances galore” (p. 121); these mischievous actions symbolized hegemonic masculinity; they were equated with the expectation of the male’s superior physical ability to partake in such acts. Noting Romo’s actions of new-laddism or the exhibition of “loutish, “pub-and-porn” narcissism, which the new-lad culture explicitly celebrates,” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 223) *Star Magazine* asserted, “Tony parties all night” (“Tony Caught Cheating, 2009,” p. 50). Detailing his “all night” antics *Star Magazine* additionally reported,

Tony spent Friday night drinking at My House nightclub in Hollywood. He left around 2 a. m. in a black SUV with pal Stephen Colletti and a pretty blonde-who was not the girl he later got busy with at Jessica’s place (“Tony Caught Cheating,” 2009, p. 50)

*US Weekly*, similarly noted, “Romo left a club Jan. 16 in L. A. and brought pals to the home of Simpson, who was away. A tabloid says he cheated with a brunette that night” (“Bullied For,” 2009, p. 59).

Romo’s alleged romantic trysts and antics afforded him what Whannel (1999) called “masculine individualism” (p. 262). Photographed “partying with a hot young blonde at a Chicago nightclub” (“Jessica Ruins,” 2008, p. 40) and indulging in the nightlife, having “bottles of liquor delivered to his table” (“Tony Caught Cheating,” 2009, p. 50), allowed Romo to live above parameters imposed by traditional boundaries

of relationships. Furthermore, the overpowering valuation of these masculine traits allowed Romo to rebel against such constraints without disadvantageous representations by the media (Whannel, 1999). Lauding Romo's actions, *The Los Angeles Times* stated,

There's nothing wrong with having a personality and a little fun and if he winds up regretting it, the very engaging Tony Romeo will morph into the very boring Tony Roboto right before our eyes, and the league will be a lot poorer for it. (Litke, 2008, D4)

These public displays of control, power, indulgence and sexual prowess anointed Romo as a desirable man. A song of the 1920s entitled "You've Got to Be a Football Hero to Get Along with a Beautiful Girl" furthered the notion of Romo being a wanted sportsman (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 161). Being a professional quarterback, which alongside the running back position receives "more attention than all the other combined," reiterated that the "heroes were quarterbacks and running backs" (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 161). Such a position reaffirmed the anointment of Romo as a wanted sportsman. In expounding on Romo as the "wanted sportsman," Michael Irvin quoted within *USA Today* stated, "'I've never seen a rise as fast as Tony Romo's,' Hall of Fame Cowboys wideout Michael Irvin says. 'Young ladies are yelling, 'Will you marry me?'" Jessica may have something to say about that" (Corbett, 2008, p. 09c).

Ultimately, Romo as a "wanted sportsman" represented the exalted male and the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. Sabo and Panepinto (1990) in recollection of the folklore, mythology and media prominence surrounding the sport of football noted the game "prioritizes competitiveness, asceticism, success (winning), aggression, violence, superiority to women, and respect for compliance with male authority" (p. 115). Hence, Romo's actions became reflective of football itself, marginalizing and subordinating the

female body while upholding the dominant ideologies of sport (Mandelbaum, 2004; Messner, 1988; Sabo & Panepinto, 1990) that aid “in the reproduction of male hegemony over women, as well as hegemonic masculinity” (Wheaton, 2000, p. 448).

In addition, as a “new man,” Romo’s physical appearance was further accentuated. Similar to Cashmore and Parker’s (2003) notion of David Beckham as a “metrosexual” (p. 225) and Rahman’s (2004) description as “captain of the England football team (with a niohican hairstyle on appointment) and international model (for Police sunglasses until 2003), fashion dandy and sarong wearer (p. 220), Romo too was highlighted for his physicality. Labeled as, “hunky” (“Tony Caught Cheating,” 2009, p. 49), “football hunk” (“Jess The Three,” 2008, p. 4), and even noting that “he looked good in a light-blue button-up shirt with his sleeves rolled up” (“Tony Caught Cheating,” 2009, p. 50), ultimately positioned Romo as a “manly man.” The media’s emphasis on Romo’s gender appropriate male attire (i.e., the button-up shirt) placed him at the top the masculine hierarchy, unlike Beckham whose untraditional fashion choices and “self regardingly “vain,” feminized aesthetics as “beautiful,” “unashamed” of both vanity and homosexual adoration” (Rahman, 2004, p. 28) situated him as a threat to masculinity. Similar to “tennis star Andre Agassi, basketball player Michael Jordan, home run hitter Mark Maguire, and quarterback Doug Flutie,” Romo too has benefited from and furthermore profited from his “good looks” (Sabo & Messner, 2001, p. 29–30). Ultimately, Romo’s obedience to traditional gender demarcations, which are force-fed since birth, allowed Romo to garner great public admiration and an increased sense of

machismo (Greendorfer, 2001; Jacklin & Maccoby, 1978; Sage, 1990; Wasserman & Stern, 1978).

In the midst of his ultra-masculine praise, Romo's portrayal as a "down-to-earth," "humble" individual ("Tony's Modest," 2008, p. 55), positioned him as the antithesis to the bad-boy, chauvinistic, indulgent body imbued in the new-lad image. Noting Romo's humility, *USA Today* stated, "With thousands of fans chanting his name, Romo stays true to his third-string roots, signing post-practice autographs" (Corbett, 2008, 09c).

Furthermore, *The Dallas Morning News* noted,

He may have the hottest-selling jersey in the NFL. He may star in a new Pepsi commercial. He may soon come into more millions through an endorsement deal with Starter, the sports apparel company. And you're likely to see his face on the cover of *People* or *Us Weekly* as your groceries are scanned at the local market... Maybe you heard about a \$2.5 million bet he made at a Las Vegas casino, even though it never happened. Maybe you heard more than a few times that he and Ms. Simpson are engaged or have broken up, even though neither even happened.... "He handles everything extremely well," Cowboys linebacker Bobby Carpenter said. "Not too many can handle it day in and day out, but he does and he's so humble." (Archer, 2008, p. 1)

In continuation of Romo's humility, *The Dallas Morning News* stated,

As his star has grown, Mr. Romo has fought to remain the same guy he was before he became the Cowboys' quarterback. He doesn't have a fleet of cars to choose from. He only recently moved out of the same place he had since his second season to a 5,500 square-foot manse in Cottonwood Valley. (Archer, 2008, p. 1)

Romo's down-to-earth modest nature was in stark contrast to Simpson representation as a diva where *The New York Daily News* noted,

With a \$1,760 Louis Vuitton dog bag, pop star-turned-country-singer Jessica Simpson's spending habits are more Saudi princess than Southern bumpkin. She once dropped \$750 on two bras and matching panties, and sources say she spent \$16,000 to fly her hair and makeup team to Iraq for a USO performance. (Schreffler et al., 2009, p. 22)

Simpson's spending habits in comparison to Romo's representation as the savvy spender, allowed for further characterization of Romo as the unpretentious man. *The Los Angeles Times* continued the theme of Romo as the modest man and Good Samaritan stating,

Sharon White of Irving, Texas, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that while she and her husband tended to their flat tire on the side of a busy street, a well-dressed man "with something strange on his chin" pulled over and offered to help. White said she asked twice whether the man was Romo, and Romo -- his chin bandaged to cover 13 stitches—finally replied, "Yes, ma'am." (Peltz, 2008, para. 4–5)

While the helper trait can be perceived as feminine, seen as the female trait of handling household chores, the male usually refrains from such duties to reassure his sense of masculinity (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Baxter, 1997; Brines, 1994; Geist, 2005; Gupta, 1999; Treas, 2008; Van der Lippe & Siegers, 1994; Yodanis, 2005). Romo's representation as the helper, however, denoted the chivalrous man, the knight in shining armor. While Romo's humility could be perceived as a lesser form of masculinity, his war-like actions as the knight in shining armor afforded him a favorable representation. Hence, Romo's representation afforded him cultural capital and as a result established his position on the masculine hierarchical order.

As Wheaton (2000) asserted, "masculinity is a social, cultural, and historical construct, dependent on and related to other factors such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and disability" (p. 438). Romo's image furthered the notion that he is truly representative of the archetypal hegemonic male: physically fit, straight, White male (Vincent & Crossman, 2007). It should be noted, in regards to the above statement, that Romo, born "Antonio Ramiro Romo" is of Mexican-American decent, as "his father's father Ramiro Romo Sr., for whom Tony is in part named, having emigrated from Muzquiz, Coahuila,

Mexico to San Antonio when he was young” (Gilliland, 2008, p. 1). Yet, as columnist Rawlins Gilliland (2008) articulated, “I have yet to hear Tony Romo called a Mexican-American winner” (p. 1). In further expansion of such notion, Gilliland (2008) stated, “Romo’s mother is Polish-German descent. So by any definition, this 27-year-old man is in every respect All American” (p. 1). While the “elder Romo cites, according to San Antonio sportswriter David Flores, Tony’s success as an example of the possibilities afforded to immigrants in the United States,” (Gilliland, 2008, p. 1), the media’s promptness to anoint him as nothing other than a synergistic representation of the Dallas Cowboys moniker of “America’s team” is undoubtedly evident.

While the contention that Romo’s representation materializes due to his own personal and public imbuelement of his identity, the media’s partiality towards his American, Caucasian lineage illustrated Walton and Butryn’s (2006) contention that “skin color has become the predominant marker of cultural understanding of race, whereas culture, ethnic background, and other factors were more salient in the past” (pp. 4–5). Therefore, the media’s representation showed that Romo’s outward physical fair-skinned appearance eclipsed the need to acknowledge his ethnic lineage. This allowed for Romo’s representation within the media to be aligned with the notion of the truly White hegemonic male.

As “athleticism is equated with virility or machismo” (Cohen, 2001, p. 234) and “sport has long been regarded as one of the last bastions of male domination” (Cashmore & Parker, 2003, p. 223), the representation of Romo as the hegemonic male anointed him a “football star” (“Tony Caught Cheating,” 2009, p. 49), “NFL star” (“Tony Serenades,”



2008, pp. 44–45) and “star quarterback” (“Jessica’s Wedding,” 2008, p. 54). The notion of masculinity conjures up the meaning “to embody force, to embody competence” (Connell, 1983, p. 27). Romo was identified as embodying the notion that he is a competent, masculine being. Moreover, Romo’s position as quarterback where he functions in a “central” position, which coaches denote requires “intelligence” (Johnson, 1988, p. 271), represented Romo’s aptitude. The media’s anointment of Romo as a proficient and smart man is in contrast to the representations of Simpson as an unintelligent woman, a dumb blonde. Although the label of Simpson as the femme fatale insinuated otherwise, it would be erroneous to state that the media still did not portray Simpson as a ditsy, unintelligent woman. As Whannel (2001) noted, the press insinuated that David Beckham “is not too bright” (p. 141), which additionally reiterated Beckham as the antithesis to the definition of what it is to be the masculine man. Romo, on the other hand, embraced the ideals of the masculine man as favorable descriptors were increasingly employed.

As his physical traits upheld the notion that a football star is equated to being an almighty powerful and brawny being (Bridel & Rail, 2007), Romo’s representation on the playing field mirrored that of football itself. Therefore, Romo garnered the “good sportsman” persona that Whannel (1999) noted as, “team-oriented, focused, abstinent and disciplined” (p. 262). In expanding the good sportsman image, *USA Today* noted, “Romo seemed to set the tone for a night featuring seven lead changes when he raced onto the Texas Stadium field through a lane of Cowboys cheerleaders during pregame introductions. Romo was amped up” (Corbett, 2008, p. 01c).

Phrasing such as “set the tone for the night” (Corbett, 2008, p. 01c) established Romo as a leader and a controller of his own occupational success, similar to the depiction of the archetypal sporting husband (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). This moreover illustrated an idea in stark contrast to the conviction that Romo’s performance could be so easily influenced by the likes of his lover.

In continuing the “good” sportsman veneer, specifically emphasizing Romo’s athletic focus, *Star Magazine* stated, “Jessica is frustrated. He takes the football season very seriously and believes the old wives’ tale that having sex before big games weakens an athlete (“Tony To Jessica,” 2008, p. 21). As sacrifice is integral in the construction of the athlete’s persona, Romo’s abstinence from the basic physiological need for sex illustrates his commitment and loyalty to his profession. *USA Today* portrayed Romo as a committed, disciplined being in stating,

Tony *Romo* spent part of his offseason as a couch quarterback. *Romo*, who led the Dallas Cowboys to a 13–3 mark and had 36 touchdowns and 4,211 passing yards, drilled pass after pass during an unorthodox home-improvement regimen. He honed his release in hopes of ending his 0–2 playoff drought. (Corbett, 2008, p. 09c)

And furthermore noted,

Before minicamps and organized team activities, his sofa cushions became Terrell Owens, Jason Witten and Patrick Crayton as Romo set up in an imaginary, living-room pocket, flicking passes until his release was smoother, quicker. (Corbett, 2008, p. 09c)

Though *The Dallas Morning News* noted that “earlier this off-season, Hall of Famers Aikman and Roger Staubach said Romo needed to understand all that comes with being

the Cowboys quarterback”(Archer, March 24, 2009), *The Dallas Morning News* was quick to reiterate Romo’s dedication and commitment:

Romo has been a regular visitor to Valley Ranch, even though the off-season conditioning program does not begin until Monday... During the last three weeks, Romo and Roy Williams as well as some of the other receivers have had throwing sessions to improve their timing. (Archer, March, 24, 2009)

Romo’s image as a disciplined player brought him adulation and the favorable label of the good sportsman (Whannel, 1999). His discipline, control, dedication, and athletic prowess were all rudimentary in his portrayal as either an emasculated or a masculine male. This illustration was evident in the depiction of his contemporaries Michael Jordan (McDonald & Andrews, 2001) and David Beckham (Whannel 1999, 2001; Cashmore & Parker, 2003) as the exaltation or marginalization of the male is solely dependent on time and place (Connell, 2005); thus “sporting masculinity is not a single monolithic category (Wheaton, 2005, p. 453). While a defeat depicted Romo as temporarily deflated, the prominent, overall representation was advantageous in the absence of successive losses. Ultimately, Romo’s representation illustrated the continuous quest to prove and reprove masculinity (Kimmel, 2001). As hegemony must be “renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (Williams, 1977, p. 112), Romo’s on-field success faltered temporarily. However, the projection of “new-laddist” actions and the exhibition of the knight-in-shining-armor façade became a means by which to reprove his masculinity, becoming inevitably demonstrative that hegemony “does not just passively exist as a form of dominance” (Williams, 1977, p. 112).

## Discussion

The contention that celebrities “private lives will attract greater public interest than their professional lives” (Turner, 2004, p. 4) further revealed the public’s incessant need to probe, regardless of how intrusive, into a celebrity’s existence. As a result of such actions, the notion that celebrities garner greater cultural worth over the “ordinary” human being becomes evident (Holbrook & Singer, 2009; Meyers, 2009; Rojek, 2001). While the public’s fixation on celebrity lies outside of the scope of this research, it can be noted that the media’s enthrallment with the pedestrian aspects of Simpson and Romo’s lives superseded their professional achievements.

As previously noted, this study compartmentalized both Simpson and Romo as achieved celebrities, suggesting that individually both Simpson and Romo garnered adulation from their perceived talents and skills (Rojek, 2001). Yet, among the multitude of representations within the selected media, magazines and newspapers, it is to be articulated that Simpson’s representation in particular wavered slightly outside of the categorization of an “achieved celebrity” while Romo’s remained intact. Simpson’s representation garnered ridicule minimizing her professional achievements, which had been lauded in the past (Clayton & Harris, 2004).

Since this study employed Rojek’s (2001) categorization of celebrity, it is to be noted that while Simpson’s representation suggested minor faltering from previous celebrity categorization, the representation exempted from projecting Simpson’s celebrity residing within the “attributed” celebrity domain. Therefore, the media did not represent Simpson as a “celetoid” (Rojek, 2001, p. 18) or as an “ordinary” person who “was

vaulted into public consciousness as noteworthy figures, primarily at the behest of mass-media executives pursuing circulation or ratings wars” (Rojek, 2001, p. 18). As Simpson and Romo’s pairing vaulted them further into contemporary culture, their representations manifested into a landscape of media saturation where the difference between fact and fiction was distorted.

Similar to the sizeable repercussions that companies historically have received amidst the wrath of rumor (Bordia, DiFonzo & Schulz, 2000; Einwiller & Kamins, 2008; Iyer & Debevec, 1991; Tybout et al., 1981), Simpson and Romo too were not exempt from the effects of the rumor-mill. As *Sports Illustrated* declared, “No longer a simple Venn diagram of *sports* and pop culture, the romance between *Tony Romo* and *Jessica Simpson* has become a gossip vortex” (Torre, 2008, p. 20). As outlandish remarks saturated all facets of their relationship, their combined appeal garnered them even greater celebrity status that was not represented equally.

Contrary to Whannel’s (2002) contention that vortextuality encompasses those incidents deemed “super-major events”(p. 93), the amusement and the vortex surrounding the relationship of Simpson and Romo extended beyond the December 16, 2007, incident at Texas Stadium (i.e., the super-major event) that anointed Simpson a “jinx.” As a result, the vortex effect permeated into all faucets of their relationship. While the vortex persisted beyond that single isolated incident, the media kept the events of December 16, 2007, in the minds of their readership.”News is not neutral” (Paletz & Entman, 1981, p. 22) because it is controlled, composed, and constructed by the older, middle-class, White male (Paletz, & Entman, 1981; Messner & Solomon; Sage, 1990).

While the media reiterated the “social order,” it was not “necessarily out of a cynical self-interest or subservience to particular group interests, but certainly as an instrument for the promotion of dominant meanings and ideas” (Sage, 1990, p. 121) that deemed its effect omnipotent. Consequently, the medium of newspapers and magazines vastly contributed to the identification of the social order as the mass media’s role in the reproduction of the patriarchal order (Cho, 1993; Hargreaves, 1986; McGregor, 1989) which “systematically foster[ing] the development of men [i.e., Romo] while constraining the development of women [i.e., Simpson]” (Sage, 1990, p. 43). As a result, Simpson’s representation illustrated her inability to garner an empowering position (Pirinen, 1997). Ultimately, the media’s tendency to label Simpson disadvantageously, even in instances where she strictly adhered to feminine codes, prevailed in her overall representation. The attachment of a strong label to Simpson’s representation became a reiteration of the media’s practices regardless of publication type that “using a strong label saves space and preempts the need to prove a point suggested by the label” (Mongerson, 1997, p. 96).

As a result of the attachment of labels, Simpson’s representation did not differentiate from the fantasy world of video games where female characters’ attire “accentuate[s] their sexuality” and “reinforces sexual stereotypes” (Miller & Summers, 2007, p. 735). This parallels the notion that women are supposed to conform to a manner of dress that invites the male gaze, illustrating sexual allure and the desirability of the woman (Durham 1996, 1998; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998). This notion corresponded with Gordon’s (2008) assertion that “the media frequently present the image that

women's primary purpose is to be the young, sexy, and beautiful object of male attention, regardless of their occupation and intelligence" (p. 247). Consequently, this re-established the significance of aesthesis imbued by the mass media, especially for the female. Such things as "hair, make-up and clothing establish a personal front that conveys social competence" (Rojek, 2001, p. 103). As Simpson's heavier body emerged, the selected media's narratives became the indicative that "the absence of these characteristics implies a lack of self-discipline and, concomitantly, inferior social skills" (Rojek, 2001, p. 103).

Simpson's weight gain represented a form of descent being that "descent is established by routines of behaviour that centre on the mortification of the body" (Rojek, 2001, p. 80). Like other achieved celebrities—"Elizabeth Taylor, Elvis Presley, Marlon Brando, Roseanne Barr, Elton John and Oprah Winfrey" (Rojek, 2001, 82)—Simpson's body was scrutinized publically, and inevitably her representation became a momentary reflection of such scrutiny. Ultimately, if viewed in the most liberal sense, the media represented that Simpson herself was the primary source of her weight gain where she was the cause of her own descent, and fault was aptly positioned on her (i.e., auto-degradation). Yet, the "status-stripping" of Simpson developed into a form of "exo-degradation" where the media became the controller of her descent as a means to further Simpson's disadvantageous representation. Rojek (2001) asserted, "In general the ceremonies surrounding both forms interrelate and are mutually reinforcing" (p. 80).

As the voyeuristic gaze positioned upon Simpson's body revealed a likeness to photographic examinations of the female athlete (Duncan 1990; Duncan & Hasbrook,

1998; Theberge, 1987), this furthered the perception which established the framing of women where “they are expected to be “expressive” instead of “instrumental” (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 100) and sexualized objects, which is in stark contrast to the construction of men as performers who are assertive, dominant beings (Betterton, 1987; Duncan, 1993; Nead, 1987). Simpson’s inability to adhere to the gendered construct illustrated her failure to attract the attention of men and more specifically, to garner Romo’s attention (Connell, 2005). Through the framed (deviant) transgressions on the part of Simpson, the adverse depictions drew similarities to the representation of sportswomen who do not subscribe to the expectations of displaying traditional expectations of femininity (Pirinen, 1997). Carroll (1986) reported that

women should. . . be prohibited from sport: they are the true defenders of the humanist values that emanate from the household, the values of tenderness, nurture and compassion, and this most important role must not be confused by the military and political values inherent in sport. (p. 98)

Even in her adherence to socially deemed appropriate gender roles (West & Zimmerman, 1987), Simpson was afforded little reciprocal support from Romo (Ortiz, 2005), illustrating her complimentary nature to the archetypal sporting wife and girlfriend (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999). While Simpson’s archetypically complimentary nature emerged, the continuous flux in Simpson’s representations made her not unlike Clayton and Harris’ (2004) inquiry of Victoria Beckham who was depicted contradictorily at times in comparison to the standard sporting partner.

It was imperative to note that the media representations of Tony Romo exhibited fluctuating and multifarious traits as well. Romo’s representation in print, however,



primarily accentuated the social traits of a manly man through his attire, and new-laddist actions, which afforded him the depiction of a controller of his athletic prowess (Beynon, 2002; Duncan & Messner, 1998). As a result Romo became an exalted male sport hero, embodying the principles of football itself: “courage, discipline, and camaraderie” (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 277). Romo was also represented as the embodiment of the Dallas mascot, the cowboy, symbolic of “rugged individualism and courage” (Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 187). As “he [the cowboy mascot] is a repository of the virtues that the team itself embodied-or so it sought to suggest to the public, styling itself “America’s Team””(Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 187), Romo himself though of Mexican-American descent becomes the quintessence of his teams moniker. As Bayless (1996) stated,

How would you like to be the human most responsible for preserving the weekly bragging rights of millions of followers of America’s Team? How would you like to carry the burden of a Dallas, Texas, that hitches its self-image to the Cowboy star? Cowboy losses are followed by Blue Mondays, when production falls dramatically in the Dallas-Fort Worth workplace. It’s difficult enough to play quarterback for any NFL team, let alone for the Cowboys (p. 7).

Because Aikman was “the Atlas expected to hold up the Cowboy world” (Bayless, 1996, p. 7), Romo was exempted from fault. Additionally, similar to Aikman, the former Dallas Cowboys quarterback, Romo was applauded for his aptitude and physical abilities (Bayless, 1996; Pearlman, 2008). Romo’s representation diverged from Aikman’s in the sense that Romo was categorized as a habitual cheater who indulged in libations and women; Aikman’s reclusive representation made Romo more like the former Dallas Cowboys of the 1990s, notably Michael Irvin.

While Romo's representation as a humble man and a savvy spender positioned him closer in representation to Aikman, his continued late-night gallivanting while in a relationship with Simpson situated Romo's representation as the embodiment of masculine individualism. Similar to the "individualism exemplified in the Frank Sinatra song "My Way," which "celebrates a masculine fantasy of defying constraint and advice" (Whannel, 1999, pp. 261–262), Romo's representation typified the notion of badness as a form of socially approved amusement (Whannel, 1999). While Whannel (1999) contended that "maverick masculine individualism is something that coaches, and governing bodies are concerned to root out" (p. 262), Romo's actions were lauded by coaches. His actions were demonstrative of the 1990s Dallas Cowboys organization where Jerry Jones, the owner and general manager, allegedly partook in womanizing activities, deeming such actions for players as gender appropriate, accepted behaviors (Pearlman, 2008). Therefore, Romo's representation within the selected media which corresponded to former Dallas Cowboys players was framed as gender appropriate, allowing for advantageous representations and labels to emerge in regards to his athletic prowess and obedience to gender codes of conduct.

This notion allowed Romo to navigate the world in which he dwells without difficulty. It was this fluid ease of movement within social and media constructs that garnered Romo the celebrated and sympathetic monikers of the archetypal male sporting partner and victimized him to the manipulative, deviant, and "unlucky" Simpson. While Simpson was deemed a bona fide femme fatale, a tempered siren (Rossmann, 2003), the selected media refrained from representing Romo as a *pussywhipped* man (Messner,

1994, p. 48). Messner (1994) defined the term as being “when male peers might tell a boy or young man who is spending too much time with a girlfriend—who is being too attached, he is ‘pussywhipped’” (Messner, 1994, p. 48). As the term conveys an unfavorable connotation, the media’s overt aptness to furnish Romo with favorable labels prevented the use or even the implication of such a term, and signified the media’s minimization of Romo’s actions. Therefore, the fault remained positioned on Simpson’s actions while Romo’s representation remained as the victimized man.

As Simpson was anointed another Yoko Ono, denoting her as “bad luck,” her actions regarding the December 16, 2007, incident and succeeding events mirrored Yoko Ono’s actions. Brown and Gaines (1983) noted, “[she] was different. . . [she] had something that others did not: perseverance that boarded on obsession” (p. 5). This obsessive connectivity with Lennon “went beyond chutzpah into the range of something spooky” (Brown & Gaines, 1983, p. 5). Correspondingly Simpson’s obsessive nature denoted her as a “jersey chaser”—a woman who was entangled and obsessed with Romo, his profession, and the game of football itself. Hence, the comment on *The Late Show* with David Letterman in which Simpson uttered, “He’s firing the pigskin real right.”

An examination of media representations of the Romo and Simpson’s relationship illustrated the preservation and reproduction of the hegemonic establishment. Yet, as Sage (1990) contended, “Media content that is perceived as objective news or simply innocent entertainment will not be understood as laden with hegemonic ideology” (p. 119), and the analyzed media accounts aided in providing symbols and cues to identify those in power (Kellner, 1995). This, in conjunction with the recognition of rumors and

gossip surrounding Simpson and Romo, contributed to an understanding of the emergence of these forms and media frames especially in regards to particular place and time (White, 1994).

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The media representations of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo were aligned with traditional, even outdated, social values which upheld patriarchal ideologies framing the male as superior to the female. Such a concept transpired in Simpson's disadvantageous characterization as a subjected and deviant woman. The more the media vortex became enamored of Jessica's "jinxing effect," the more favorably Romo was framed, as if his deficient performance was based solely upon her actions.

Upon analysis of Romo's 2007 and 2008 football statistics, one finds that Romo saw only slight losses in touchdown and completion percentages, and actually improved his percent of interceptions and lost less yardage as a result of sacks. It is safe to assume that his decline in performance was more likely due to a midseason injury that deprived him of significant playing time, as opposed to the psychological effects of Simpson as represented by the selected newspapers and magazines. Regardless of this apparent reality, the selected media's representations suggested that Simpson was to blame for Romo's ratings drop.

Although *US Weekly's* fashion police attempted to redistribute fault as they jokingly questioned, "Is Tony Romo her fashion curse?" ("Fashion Police," 2008, p. 92), the media placed the blame solely on Simpson. For example, *Sports Illustrated* sarcastically stated, "Has the Jessica Simpson curse again reared its head?" when noting that Simpson and Romo "attended their first Mavs game in Dallas and saw the Lakers snap the Mav's five-game winning streak" (Markazi, 2008, p. 24). While it is to be

reiterated that the December 16, 2007 incident at Texas Stadium exemplified the vortex nature of the situation and furthermore satisfied Whannel's (2002) classification as a "super-major event" (p. 93), the effect of the media's raptness went beyond a particular incident; hence *Sports Illustrated's* sarcastic comment. As the additional subsequent narratives exhibited potent characteristics, the vortex effect encompassing the initial incident was never surpassed and for that reason it became the conductor navigating the way in which successive narratives were composed. Thus, the ensuing narratives further defined the pinning of the villain against the victim and the protagonist against the antagonist. Such concept is apparent in sports narratives as "Whannel (1998) noted, "Sport is presented largely in terms of stars and narratives: the media narratives the events of sport, transforming them into stories with stars and characters, heroes and villains" (Andrews & Jackson, 2001, p. 7).

Initially exempting the notion of percolation, Romo, a sporting star himself, was compartmentalized as an "achieved" celebrity just as other sporting stars fall under this identical celebrity categorization. Simpson is also classified as an "achieved" celebrity. Corresponding narratives emerged and became embedded around even the most pedestrian aspects of Simpson and Romo's lives, providing both advantageous and disadvantageous labels. As a consequence, Romo was classified as the victim and Simpson, on the other hand, was characterized as the malevolent woman, the villain. While a multitude of labels and language surfaced about the duo, the interconnectivity between even the diverse narratives, continued to reaffirm and connote the initial labels

given (Mongerson, 1997). The media continued to position Simpson as the antagonist and Romo as the protagonist.

Simpson's appearance on *The Late Show* with David Letterman where she declared that Romo was "firing the pigskin real right" was an example of Simpson as an extension of Romo and his occupation, similar to Ono who "became sort of a fifth Beatle" (Martin, 1996, p. 166). As the media had observed, Simpson, donning his jersey, cheering him on from the luxury suites, and spouting out "ditzy blonde" football terminology and feeding into her gender expectations, alluded to her departure from her Hollywood occupation (i.e., the singer-actress) to the country-girl Texas fan.

Any departure from the gender norm was detrimental for both Simpson and Romo, yet Romo was able to survive emasculated portrayals with his new-laddist actions (i.e., indulgence in women, libations, infidelity, and late night exploits). As "many sport stars live in a world of blissful ignorance" where "they basically eat, drink, have sex and star" (Bayless, 1996, p. 4), Romo's representation, paralleling that of former Dallas Cowboy football players, epitomized the notion that his behavior and off-field antics were "chalked up to boys being boys" (Pearlman, 2008, p. 198). On the other hand, Simpson's beauty in the wake of her weight gain effected a polarization: "the chunky Barbie." Simpson's image was dependent on her ability to adhere to the feminine standard of beauty, and to the archetypal sporting wife's prescription of being "slim, attractive and with tanned complexion" (Harris & Clayton, 2004, p. 323). Not adhering to this standard led to a downfall in Simpson's representation as an "achieved" celebrity since the "mortification of the body brings the celebrity down to earth" (Rojek, 2001, p.

80). Additionally, in “contemporary American culture, the ideology of patriarchy proclaims the feminine ideal to be cosmetic perfection or glamour” and dissimilarly the “definitions of masculinity are not so intimately connected to physical appearance” (Duncan, 1990, p. 25). While Romo’s physicality was highlighted, unlike Simpson, it did not supersede his professional accomplishments and became a reaffirmation of his adherence to the male gender standard. Consequently, this continued the notion that “we are likely to evaluate a man on the basis of his actions and accomplishments” (Duncan, 1990, p. 25) and not his appearance.

Romo’s ability to maneuver the media blitz immediately allowed him to mitigate the unpleasant mass-media portrayals. Avoiding negativity was not as easy for Simpson, as each favorable portrayal accompanied a critical one. Even when Simpson subscribed to the conventional feminine traits (i.e., the supporter) the framing of such actions were deemed uncharacteristic and consequently depicted her as a fraud, or a ruse to be mocked.

While the representation of Romo’s masculinity fluctuated, the wavering was slight and actually served to uphold the ideologies of football (Gramsci, 2005; Messner, 1988; Pronger, 1990; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Trujillo, 1995; Williams, 1977). The repeated media constructs projecting Romo as a masculine male valorized him and afforded him sympathy as a victimized male. As unremitting, demeaning exposés arose on Simpson (i.e., the femme fatale, YokoRomo), the relationship became the epitome of the patriarchal order, sustaining the importance of the male body and the complementary role of the woman in society (Duncan, 1990). Previous research concerning the sporting



wife, girlfriend, and groupie aided in the recognition of the media's representation of Simpson's contradictory and complimentary portrayal of the sporting spouse (Clayton & Harris, 2004; Forsyth & Thompson, 2007; Gmelch & San Antonio, 2001; McKenzie, 1999; Powers, 1990; Thompson, 1999; Whannel, 2001). Furthermore, the literature contrasted Romo to the archetypal sporting husband, where, in actuality, he obviously resembled the dominant being.

Because the selected newspapers (*USA Today*, *Washington Post*, *Dallas Morning News*, *LA Times*, *New York Daily News*) and magazines (*US Weekly*, *Star*, *IN TOUCH*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Life & Style*) used in this inquiry contained the prevailing themes of traditional gender roles, hegemony, patriarchal order, and deviance, the salaciousness of both mediums was overt. *The Dallas Morning News* and *The Los Angeles Times*, publications in proximity to both Simpson and Romo's residences, were thought to be media outlets that would represent and describe the couple more favorably. That did not turn out to be true as these two particular publications' representations remained relatively consistent regardless of source. Hence, the frivolity commonly attributed to pop-culture glossy magazines was transferred to the less likely outlets of daily newspapers. Therefore, the assertion that newspapers hold themselves to higher standards (Holmes, 2007) seemed incongruous with the representation of Simpson and Romo's coupling, as evidence showed that newspapers did not differ from those publications deemed salacious in nature.

Although the language differed slightly, newspapers still employed the popular, catchy phrasing that one would deem infantile and reserved for celebrity entertainment

magazines (i.e., sports vs. gossip). As harsh scrutiny and insensitivity remained explicit in both mediums, the tactic employed seemed to mirror Bueno et al. 's (2007) interpretation of the content contained in the "upmarket" and populist press. Whereas Bueno et al. 's (2007) examination explained the content of magazines specifically, I employed this example to draw parallels to the representations contained within the text as it pertained to Simpson and Romo. Drawing parallels to the "upmarket" press, the media, at moments, revered both Simpson and Romo in a manner that was generally advantageous. Simultaneously, akin to the populist press, the selected mediums also illustrated malice and insensitivity, engrossed in the rumor surrounding the daily lives of the couple. While some newspapers were more apt to blame Simpson's "apparent" weight gain on the "ill-fitting, high-waisted denim pants" (Lynch, 2009, p. 7) rather than on her gorging and overindulgence in food combined with a lack of exercise, the coverage still reiterated that Simpson's weight gain made her undesirable and unfitting for a sporting star partner.

As Simpson changed from the gendered norm of beauty and was anointed with the unbecoming titles of "Yoko Ono" and "femme fatale," the media, newspapers as well as magazines, began to categorize Simpson as the antithesis to her previous infamous dumb blonde persona. While the previous anointment of Simpson as an unintelligent, "ditsy" (Debler, 2008, p. 19) woman seemed overly employed, even beneficial to her success during her time on the reality show, *Newlyweds*, her relationship with Romo and the alleged "jinxing" effect became a means to furnish a new, albeit disadvantageous labeling.

While it would be erroneous to state that the mass media departed entirely from labeling Simpson the ditz, the relationship between herself and Romo allowed the media to represent Simpson as an amendment to her bubblehead persona. The additional unfavorable labels (i.e., the Yoko Ono, Femme Fatale) did not void the contention that Simpson epitomized the dumb blonde. Thus, the media's diversion allowed for the news labels to permeate through the vortex while simultaneously upholding the patriarchal order. Ultimately, the "vortex effect" was so potent that what would have been previously deemed insignificant materialized into a narrative of fascination held by the masses. On April 15, 2009, the interest in Simpson's "jinxing" effect had not ceased as *The Washington Post* noted, "One of the league's most intense rivalries is renewed at the Cowboys' new-billion-dollar stadium. No word if Jessica Simpson will be in attendance" ("The Redskins, 2009," p. D02). This continuous development blurred the lines between what is considered newsworthy and reiterated the mass media's interest in the domain of celebrity regardless of publication type.

Ultimately, the adherence to McDonald and Birrell's (1999) theoretical framework for reading texts, specifically sport texts, critically aided in navigating the power representations that projected the societal values imbued within the media's representation of the sport-celebrity relationship of Simpson and Romo. This further allowed for an acknowledgment of the contradictory nature of the textual content and the implementation of the media's practices. As Allport and Postman (1947) stated, "Although rumor travels primarily through spontaneous oral discourse, the part played by the printed word should not be underestimated" (p. 186). Thus, this particular analysis

did not dismiss nor discount the role of media and its practices. While the definition of “rumor and gossip semantically intertwine” (Rosnow & Fine, 1976, p. 84), the distinguishing factors of both occur within their life-cycle patterns. Differentiation manifests itself in the forms of a pattern of rapid emergence followed by unforeseen extinction or a slow gestation accompanied with a long, persistent lifespan. As gossip represents a “rapid metamorphosis” that simply “vaporizes in thin air” (Rosnow & Fine, 1976, p. 85), rumor rather illustrates a bell curve: an ascent, a peak, and a descent.

In recognition of the definition that distinguishes gossip from rumor, or vice versa, in conjunction with Allport and Postman’s (1947) long adhered to guide for the analysis of rumor, the representation of Simpson and Romo from December 17, 2007, to April 15, 2009, illustrated that of rumor. As a rumor, the representation illustrated a “packaged story” or a “deliberately planted” idea for mere entertainment purposes (Rosnow & Fine, 1976, p. 22). As Allport and Postman (1947) stated, “Insofar as rumors pretend to be informative-designative, they are always, in part at least, erroneous. Since this pretense is always present, they are invariably a deceptive mode of discourse” (p. 167).

The representation of Simpson and Romo illustrated the erroneous nature of rumor and epitomized the notion of hearsay and longevity as well. Furthermore, the representation of Simpson and Romo typified the notion of rumor being “impetuous in nature” (Allport & Postman, 1947, p. 170). The rumors propagated by the selected media outlets lingered until gradually those rumors became infrequent, irrelevant, and uninteresting to journalists and the general populace alike. It would be irresponsible and

inaccurate to state that all events that surfaced during the selected time reflected and represented rumor alone. Stories that emerged eluding to specific instances of Romo's infidelity arose and dissipated quickly, categorizing such portrayal as simply gossip. Moreover, it was the larger representation, rather than the smaller idle chat surrounding such instances, which categorized him as unfaithful and chauvinistic, leading to these characterization becoming rumors.

As rumors "accurately signify the state of mind of the teller" (Allport & Postman, 1947, p. 167), biases as well as selectivity of reporting became apparent. Ultimately, while the representation may indeed have presented some form of factual occurrence or truth, the printed account failed to disclose or divulge the whole truth and the reporting was not balanced. Hence, the salaciousness that emerged in the selected media, regardless of type, inevitably became pivotal in both Simpson and Romo's overall representation.

Ultimately, the mass media's frames surrounding Simpson and Romo's coupling spoke to a broader subject regarding who is the villain and who is the victim within the public realm. As this particular theme emerged in relation to the literary evidence concerning deviance, hegemony, hierarchical structures and traditionalized gender roles, the notion of an autonomous woman linking with a hegemonic exalted male seemed incongruous. As with the portrayals of Victoria Beckham (Clayton & Harris, 2004) and Janet Jones (Jackson, 2001), the deviant, autonomous sporting spouse cannot maintain dominance. These recurring themes and typologies contributed credence to the phenomenon of the sport-celebrity couple. It was the favorable portrayal of the man over

the woman, the standard over the deviant, the dominant over the subordinate that contributed to the representation and to the concept that the sport-celebrity couple creates a vortex of newsworthy salacious gossip intended to create a villain and a victim, a protagonist and antagonist. Donald Hall, “in his essay composed on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the popular favorite ‘Casey at Bat,’ reminds us that we are the Mudville crowd, first cheering on our hero and then agonizing over his failure” (Cochran, 1991, p. 82). Yet, as in all epic tales, their authors, media outlets, seek out the “happy endings” that continue to be “de rigueur [required] in sport films” (Cochran, 1991, p. 82). Although Simpson was portrayed as the villain, Romo emerged as the hero.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

While this particular study delved into the media’s analysis of the specific sport-celebrity coupling of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo, the examination of sport-celebrity coupling is not new. However, this phenomenon also should not be kept from further examination. While examination of magazine and newspaper articles and application of qualitative analysis contributed to the goal of this study, “new media” outlets such as the Internet, blogs and video sites should not be disregarded in future inquiries (i.e., Soukup, 2006). As Soukup (2006) noted, “Unfortunately, few scholars have examined the connections between fandom, the World Wide Web, and contemporary celebrity culture—connections that may represent a fundamental shift in everyday meaning-making and systematic representation in a media-dominated culture” (p. 320).

Utilization of “new media” sources concurrently with traditional media outlets may uncover diverse aspects of the sport-celebrity relationship and help us to understand

it in new ways. While examining the media's portrayal of celebrity couples basking in the limelight was the aim of this analysis, implementing a focus group of consumers of mass media regarding this specific relationship would lend further insight into media framing (Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). This would allow for exploration of the readers employment of cognitive heuristics and categorical thinking (Rozin, Ashmore & Markwith, 1996; Tinsely, 1992; Zuckerman & Chaiken, 1998). Additionally, while it might seem pertinent to interview the couples engaged in this type of pairing, as well as the opinions of teammates and fans regarding the assumed consequences of such a relationship on their lives and performance, it was not within the scope of this study to do so. Such examinations would need to be left to those conducting a psychosocial analysis of the sport-celebrity couple.

Though this particular study examined relationships where the male was the athlete and the female was the celebrity, studying the remaining composites, especially scenarios in which both individuals are athletes, would be useful. Such studies would provide building blocks to the way the media and we, as individuals, presume the different roles of each person in a relationship. Such endeavor may draw upon this study and present findings to supplement the sociological aspects of this specialized analysis.

### Implications

While similar to any romantic pairing, the power structures in society play a pertinent role in the ways in which we conduct our daily lives. It is through the study of relationships that we see trends regarding the forging of dominance and subordination of individuals. These trends become equally as important in the composition of societal

power structures. As inner workings of relationships draw parallels to those of society as a whole, they prove relevant to various schools of thought within the study of social structures. As the media strung together narratives to create a storyline, positioning one person as the antagonist and the other as the protagonist, their methods spoke to the larger role of labeling individuals within society. It is through this labeling of individuals as good or bad, superior or inferior that allowed these labeled individuals to navigate through life with either relative ease or difficulty. Acknowledgment of this trend is especially pertinent as society continually mimics their celebrity counterparts assuming the labels that the media imposes on their favorite star. As Boon and Lomore (2001) argued, “The need to understand and explain the ways in which these important social relationships affect people’s lives is likely to become increasingly urgent”(p. 460).

The sport-celebrity pairing of Jessica Simpson and Tony Romo does not correspond to every sport-celebrity relationship and furthermore cannot be representative of all aspects of other romantic relationships. The research conducted is not simply an exposè on Simpson and Romo but a pertinent addition to the sparse literature focused on the sport-celebrity pairing.



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## Appendix A

### Jessica Simpson Biography

*Information Compiled from Fox News (2009)*

Name: Jessica Simpson/ Birth name: Jessica Ann Simpson.

Birth date: July 10, 1980 in Abilene, Texas-(Childhood residence: Richardson, Texas).

Parents: Joe (father); Tina (mother); Ashlee (younger sister).

Marital Status: Divorced (2002- 2006); ex-husband, Nick Lachey.

Current Occupation: Singer/songwriter; actress, author, entrepreneur, spokesperson for Operation Smile.

Education: J. J. Pearce High School (dropped out senior year).

Discography: Sweet Kisses (1999) (*double platinum*); Irresistible (2001) (*gold*); This Is The Remix (2002); In This Skin (2003) (*3 million copies sold*); Rejoyce The Christmas Album (2004); Public Affair (2006) (*No. 5 US Charts*); Do You Know (2008).

Reality Show: Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica (2003- 2005); forty-one aired episodes.

Film: The Dukes of Hazzard (2005) (Nominated for Worst Actress Razzie); Employee of the Month (2006); Blonde Ambition (2008); Major Movie Star (2008).

Television: That 70s Show (2002–2003); Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica (2003–2005); The Twilight Zone (episode, 2003); Nick and Jessica's Family Christmas (2004); The Nick and Jessica Variety Hour (2004).

## Appendix B

### Tony Romo Biography

*Complied from Tony Romo Official Website (2009)*

Name: Tony Romo.

Birth name: Antonio Ramiro Romo.

Birthplace: San Diego, California.

Birth date: April 21, 1980.

Martial Status: Single

Current Occupation: National Football League quarterback, Dallas Cowboys.

Parents/Siblings: Ramiro (father); Joan (mother); Sisters (older): Danielle & Jossalyn.

Childhood residence: Burlington, Wisconsin (primary school-high school graduation)

Childhood sport participation: Basketball, baseball and golf.

High School Education: Burlington High School (graduated in 1999)

High School Sport: A nonstarter, Romo was granted an opportunity to play his junior year earning him All-State recognition and as a result was granted partial collegiate football scholarship. Romo also earned All-State recognition in basketball.

College Education: Eastern Illinois University (graduated: 1999–2002)

College Sport/Award: Football; All-American; Walter Payton Award recipient (2002); All-American.

NFL: Undrafted in 2003, Romo accepted walk-on opportunity from the Dallas Cowboys beginning as third-string quarterback in 2003. Starting as quarterback since 2007, Romo is an All-Pro quarterback, participating in both the 2007 and 2008 Pro Bowl's.

## Appendix C

### Formation of Interest and Bias

For the purpose of full disclosure and to increase the validity of this study, this section addresses the influences on my interest in this material. I had been the target of rumor and gossip during my four-year high-school career in a small, affluent suburban town in middle-American.

Granville, Ohio is the proud “Home of the Blue Aces”—where 680 high school students along with 2,487 (U. S. Census Data, 2000) of their family members, close friends, college students and other professionals have chosen the quaint village as their escape from the more chaotic lifestyle in the capital city of nearby Columbus. In stereotypical small-town fashion—where diversity referred to the 3. 3% (U. S. Census, 2000) of the people who checked the box next to anything other than white on their census survey, and image reigned supreme—rumors and gossip ran rampant well outside the walls of Granville High. The “Who’s Who” upon the pedestals of high school sports quickly became the talk of the town, the discussion known frequently to be off the topic of pure athleticism. In a perennial battle for one-upmanship between students and vicarious parents alike, no topic filled the desire for provocation quite like the romantic relationship, where the art of suggestion was a key component. From the locker-filled hallways to gymnasium locker rooms, the worlds of academia and athleticism were an afterthought to the practice of sanctimonious gossip. Even the parent-filled stadiums and SUVs that brought them there were brimming with idle chatter, from which I as a student-athlete was not immune.

It was the fall term of my freshman year. The sensationalist world that was high school welcomed me with the perfect introduction to the intrinsic link between sexuality and sport. Frankly, it was my naïveté that became my misfortune as, at a meager 15 years of age, I found myself drawn to the jocks that roamed the hallways and garnered popularity. I became immersed in their culture finding their allure undeniable and furthermore, irresistible. I found myself enamored with the sport of football and a starting senior who had taken a keen interest in me as well. Thus, in the spirit of spontaneous customary teenage behavior, we began dating. As a starting athlete myself, I knew the rigors of sport, the lofty expectations imbued by coaches, parents and vicarious fans alike. Yet, what I did not recognize, nor comprehend, were the detrimental effects of distraction, and the furnishing of disadvantageous labels that accompanied these so-called behaviors. It was our personal interactions that became topic for discussion as if I alone had a hindering effect on his on-field performance. Resultantly, every on-field mistake jeered an unpleasant stare in the stadium as if I were a vile plague, a detriment to his success and moreover a deterrent that temporarily halted him in garnering an athletic scholarship. On the other hand, my less than favorable performance on the soccer pitch was perceived as karma for my alleged malevolent actions over his athletic prowess. Climatically, the breaking up of our relationship subsequently granted him a college scholarship and led him to his “Shangri-la.” For the remainder of the year and my high school career, the effects of the salacious gossip branded me with an ever-minding notion that I would bear the brunt of the blame for the future shortcomings of male partners. While I would come to find this dynamic playing a role of increasing pertinence

throughout my own development, ultimately, acknowledgment of such has contributed to broadening my personal awareness of societal values.

One of the greatest insights to social mores is through the representations cast by the media. As a mass-media consumer, I was then and am now not immune to the lure of the celebrity persona. As a result, I have developed my own pre-determinations about their actions and mannerisms, not merely as a collective body but also regarding highly publicized individuals. For generations, the majority of American society has felt a connection with those who frequently occupy our media outlets. It is an apparent sense of ownership, as if these personalities belong to the American public, where through a headline, interview, appearance or performance, a bond may form. Many believe that these are not just people we have been made aware of, rather they are people with whom we have intimate knowledge of and, as such, on whose behalf we could even speak with no basis other than our own interpretive instincts. In fact, there are few among us who could not point to a time when we found ourselves defending or villainizing a public figure with great certainty despite a complete lack of first-hand information. I, too, have found myself at times stumbling across this knowledge gap whose lines have been blurred by media immersion.

As a female in the field of Kinesiology, I have found myself frequently subjected to the direct or indirect effect of the male hegemonic system that is abundant in the world of sport. Because of this, I have developed a critical perception of the implications that even seemingly innocuous stereotypical gender portrayals, especially within the sporting media, have upon the realities of female progression through a traditionally male-

dominated industry. The media plays an immense role in shaping public opinion; as such, I believe it is responsible for providing images of females as able beings with strength and drive equal to and independent of their male counterparts; not as an exercise of feminist credo, but rather as a representative account of the diverse reality that penetrates male and female coexistence.

I do believe there is a need to counterweight the societal imbalance that inhibits truly equal opportunity and hence, I empathize with ideological factions that promote such an end. I am dissatisfied with the status quo of gender relations and am open to the possibility that the media still oppresses the advancement of the independent female in modern society. I am disenchanted by a social structure that obscures realism in favor of sensationalism, which is readily apparent in the bulk of media focus; yet, I too, cannot deny an occasional indulgence in this type of sensationalism.

For the purpose of this study, while I cannot detach my personal precepts altogether, I have sought to design a disquisition that is open to challenging my preexisting notions in order to benefit my foremost intent—determining the role of media representation in social development.